

# Help your child develop good study skills

For students in secondary school

## What are study skills?

Good study skills allow your teen to successfully learn the information that is taught at school. Active listening and participation in class, making effective notes, reviewing notes and predicting test questions are all examples of important study skills.

## Working with our brains

Recent research has shown that our brains learn and remember new information best when we use colour, symbols and diagrams, and connect it to familiar information that we already know. Your teen can use this knowledge to make notes that will help him better understand the information taught at school.

## Effective note-making techniques

*Mind mapping* is a popular note-making technique that uses words, colors and images. *Mind maps* help us learn material quickly and efficiently. They begin in the middle of a page with the main topic and then branch out to deal with each of the subtopics being studied.

Mind maps are particularly powerful study tools because they:

- help us make connections between important ideas and concepts
- turn information into visual images
- involve the whole brain
- allow for easy review of material

## Predicting test questions

Another very useful study skill for your teen to know and master is anticipating questions that might appear on tests. Encourage her to:

- take the major subtopics from the unit of study, which she has identified on her mind map as important
- write down all the questions she can think of that might be asked on that topic
- write out answers to the various questions and rate the quality of their answers

You can play an important role in helping your teen to use and master this skill. Help him identify important subtopics, create appropriate questions for each subtopic and come up with effective answers to these questions.

## Create a homework-friendly environment

Homework encourages students to develop an independent, organized approach to learning. It provides them with an opportunity to practice new skills, explore new ideas and build strong work habits. By creating a homework-friendly home, you let your teen know that learning is important and that it takes effort to ensure success.

## Help your teen prepare to study

With your teen, develop a schedule for daily homework, assignments and review. Find a good place to study with:

- no distractions (TV, phone, stereo, video games). Put up a "Do Not Disturb" sign, if necessary.
- a comfortable chair and a desk/table with a flat surface. The desk should face a blank wall (free from clutter) to help your child concentrate better.
- good lighting

Make sure your teen has:

- school agenda with noted assignments
- textbooks, writing supplies
- access to a computer (optional)
- a dictionary

### **Tips to help with homework**

Encourage your teen to remember the **What, When, Where** and **How** for assignments given at school. The following information should be recorded in the student agenda on a daily basis:

- **What** is the assignment about?
- **When** is it due? Time lines for due dates should be recorded.
- **Where** to get information to complete the assignment. Attention should be paid to suggestions given by teachers.
- **How** to prepare for and do the project

### **How to ensure greater success**

The **PQ4R** method is a formula for successful studying at the intermediate and senior levels. Encouraging your child to follow this method would allow for the development of good study skills.

**P = Preview** the material by:

- looking for main ideas and subjects
- identifying new vocabulary
- using a dictionary for meanings of new words. Use new words in various sentences to show different meaning.

### **Q = Question**

- Encourage your child to look at headlines and form questions about what they are about to read. Possible answers should also be given.

### **R = Read, Record, Recite and Review**

- **read** section by section. Choose the main points while attempting to answer questions.
- **record** key points/ideas in her own words
- **recite** in his own words what he just read without looking at the material
- **review** the main points of the material read

### **Suggestions to maintain good study habits when there is no assigned homework**

If your child tells you that there is no homework for any given day, the following can be used:

- begin work on the next topic to be covered in class
- plan outline of the next assignment due
- review previous (week's, month's) notes
- practice math and science formulae
- engage your child in creative assignments, such as preparing a project that shows new learning on a unit completed, or write or talk about his own version of a chapter just completed