

# Help your child develop good study skills

For middle school students

Good study skills allow your child 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.

## Develop concentration

Here are a few tips you can use to help your child improve concentration:

- help your child to find a good place to study, e.g. a desk with a comfortable chair
- encourage him to use the same studying place regularly
- make sure the space has good lighting
- help her find the best time to study. Every child is different. Some may be better able to remember things right after school, others may need a break after school and others may prefer to study in the evening.
- have him stick to one subject at a time
- help her set small goals, e.g. take two pages of notes a night
- encourage him to drink water. It helps improve concentration.
- give her a snack or meal before she begins studying so she is not hungry
- remove distractions such as the telephone, loud noises, television, calendars, pictures—anything that can result in daydreaming
- introduce low-level background sounds such as a bubbling aquarium, steady traffic or soft music to help cover up outside noises
- keep the room temperature cool—ideally between 18 to 21°C

## Keep studying active

### 1. *Begin with organization*

- have your child organize his notes for the unit of study and figure out if any notes are missing
- if notes are missing, encourage your child to get these from the teacher or a classmate
- locate any review sheets – often teachers will review the necessary notes to study with students
- use the review sheet as a guide
- if textbooks are available, locate the correct chapter

### 2. *Browse notes and textbooks*

- once all the information is located and in order, teach your child to browse through her notes. This means he should briefly glance (five to 30 seconds per page) through all her notes so she is aware of the main topics.
- remind him to note all the main titles, headlines, highlighted and starred items from his class notes. She should use the same technique with the textbook.
- purchase or borrow a more primary textbook or book on the material. It can help with the understanding before your child has to learn the more difficult concepts. Often these books have lots of pictures, which works well for visual learners.
- after has browsed, ask your child:
  - What do you **already know** about the topic?
  - What do you think you **don't know** about the topic?

- What vocabulary words or terms do you **already know**?
- What vocabulary words or terms **don't you know**?
- What formulas and concepts do you **already know**? (math and science)
- What formulas and concepts **don't you know**? (math and science)

### 3. *Create a mental map*

- a visual picture or diagram of what is to be learned helps to bring all the pieces of information together
- encourage your child to create a picture of the organization of her notes on a single page
- there are many types of visual organizers, including a mind map or a timeline

### 4. *Ask questions*

Many teachers give students review questions to help guide their studying. One of the best ways to review is to answer practice questions. This is particularly useful in math and science. If questions have not been provided, then your child will need to make up his own. Here are some tips for coming up with practice questions:

- help your child develop questions using the main titles, headlines, highlighted and starred items that were identified when she browsed through the material
- use the visual picture or mental map to create questions
- use various question words such as why, what, who, how, where and when
- remember that questions generate more more thinking than answers do, so be sure your child helps you develop them
- there are two types of information you should come up with questions for:
  - main topics or content ideas

- words, vocabulary, ideas and their meanings
- be sure to take advantage of review or chapter questions in the textbook

### 5. *Set goals*

- help your child set goals as to how many questions he would like to work on in one sitting
- estimate the amount of time needed to accomplish her goal, including breaks
- people need to take a short break every 30 minutes to refresh the mind
- setting lengthy or unrealistic goals with your child can lead to frustration so keep it reasonable and keep your child's attention span in mind

### 6. *Gather answers*

- students should begin to gather information to answer their study questions
- ideally, your child should read no more than a page without writing something down
- encourage him to summarize what he has read—not to copy it word for word
- responding to reading is the best way to remember it
- if your child has difficulty summarizing, have her tell you orally what she has just read before writing it down

### 7. *Make it meaningful*

- letting your child read simple books on the topic helps him grasp the more difficult concepts
- ask her to consider how she feels about what she has read, particularly in language arts, history and geography

- debate, argue or role play with your child to create greater understanding  
ask your child how things fit together

### **8. *Remember the information***

Encourage your child to use some of these strategies to help boost study skills:

- Practice
- answering questions without notes
- repeat and review the material over many days
- post sticky notes around the house with terms and vocabulary on them
- apply the ideas to real life, e.g. science with cooking, history to recent news stories, math to household expenses
- create a song, rhyme or rap to remember facts or dates
- make up a story about the material
- invite a study buddy to test or debate with him
- have her pretend to be the teacher and give you a lesson on what she has learned