

# Information for Parents



There is no single right or wrong way to study. Each child is an individual and each will find something different that works. Your child's study plan may differ from that of your neighbor's kids. If you are lucky, you may find that all your children can take the same approach to studying, but often that is not the case. The idea is to find out what works best for each child and then stick with it.

Keep in mind that the object of teaching your child how to study is just that. You are not trying to make sure they get great grades, although hopefully that will follow. You want them to learn to take the responsibility for getting their homework done. Naturally, it won't be that simple. Learning to study is a gradual process and you can expect some hurdles along the way. Work out a homework plan with your child and let them take more and more of the responsibility for carrying it out as time goes on.

Certain important practices will make life easier for everyone in the family when it comes to study time and study organization. However, some of them may require an adjustment from other members of the family.

- Turn off the TV set. Make it a house rule that whenever it is study time, it is "no TV" time. A television set that is on will draw your child's attention.
- What about the radio? Should it be on or off? Some youngsters do seem to work all right with the radio turned on to a favorite music station. The music should serve as background noise rather than be the focus of your child's attention.
- You will need to set rules about the family phone during study hours. You may need to place restrictions on the length of calls during study time. You may want to keep the phone available in case your child needs to call a classmate to confirm an assignment or to discuss difficult homework.

- Designate specific areas for homework and studying. Some suggestions are the child's room or the kitchen/dining room table. Eliminate as much distraction as possible.
  - A table that allows for all necessary supplies such as pencils, pens, paper, books and other essentials works extremely well.
  - Consider placing a bulletin board in your child's room
  - Encourage the use of a small book or pad for writing down assignments so there is no confusion about when certain assignments are due.
  - Have the typical school supplies on hand. Make it the child's responsibility to be well supplied with paper, pencils, note pads, notebook paper, etc.
- Consistency is a key factor in academic success. Serving meals at a standard time is helpful so that after eating and family discussions are over, it is time to study if that is the routine. Some students prefer to study soon after arriving home in the afternoon. Allow your child to take breaks, perhaps as a reward for finishing a section of the work.
- Organize study and homework projects with your child. Get a large calendar that has space to write things in daily boxes. If possible, consider tearing it so that one semester at a time is showing. Have the child use a marker to mark exam dates in one color, report due dates in another color, etc. This will also serve as a reminder so that your child does not procrastinate on assignments.
- Teach your child that studying is more than just doing homework assignments. Encourage your child to do such things as:
  - learn to skim material
  - take notes while reading a chapter
  - learn to make flashcards for quick review of dates, formulas, spelling words, etc.
  - learn to study tables and charts
  - learn to summarize what has been read in his/her own words
- Note taking is a critical skill and should be developed. Many students don't know how to take notes in classes that require them. Writing down every word is not necessary. Perhaps use an outline form of note taking.
- For some students rewriting notes, especially if a lot of material was covered, can serve as an excellent review. If notes are rewritten they should be used later for review and recall.
- A home dictionary can be valuable. Keep it in an accessible place and let your child see you refer to it occasionally. An inexpensive dictionary specifically for the student is fine. To use a dictionary, knowing how to alphabetize is essential. Try alphabetizing spelling words, relatives' names or favorite TV shows as a way to practice this skill.



- Help your child feel confident for tests. For some students, taking tests is traumatizing. Explain to your child that cramming the night before a test is not productive. It is better to get a good night's sleep. Remind the child to read the directions carefully and completely before beginning a test. Skip over questions for which they do not know the answers right away. They can return later if there is time. Always take an extra pencil or pen just in case.
- During study time, watch for frustration. No learning can take place or be accomplished if the child is angry or upset over an assignment that is too long or complicated. As a parent, you may have to step in and halt the homework for the night, offering to write a note to the teacher explaining the situation. You may want to talk to the teacher if this happens repeatedly.
- Should parents help with homework? Yes, if it is productive to do so, such as asking key questions or checking a math problem. No, if it is something the child can handle alone. Help and support should always be calmly and cheerfully given. Grudging help is worse than no help at all. Read directions or check over math problems after your child has completed the assignment. Make positive comments.
- How to handle report cards. Gently discuss from time to time "how is it going at school?" with your child. Questions such as, "How did your test go?" "How did you do on that report?" "How's your history project coming along?" are questions that are not third degree, but indicate interest. Find out if it is a policy at our child's school to send out "Warning notices" when work is not going well. If such notices are not sent, then grades on projects, tests and reports may be the only source of information other than what your child shares. Look out for statements such as "She's an awful teacher," "He goes too fast," etc. This may be your child's way of indicating frustration. Be cautious in contacting the teacher without your child's approval or interest. Doing so may disrupt good feelings between the two of you and make you seem to be interfering or spying.

