



STUDY SKILLS

Engaged Approach *for Learning*

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Study skills today are vastly different from the past modes of learning. And they have to be.

In the old days, students learned by rote: memorizing facts, terms, and formulas that could be recited verbatim. The problem with this method was that it did not encourage a love of learning because each fact was learned in isolation. Many students did not understand what they were memorizing, why the information was important, or how it might be connected with what they already knew.

Today, teaching and education have evolved. Students are taught to process and synthesize material, build on what they know, question what they do not, and connect the pieces together. This learning approach requires students to focus on the material, actively engage in concepts, and understand reasons for cause-and-effect.

This is not so easy in this day and age when the sheer volume and pace of schoolwork, homework, and extra-curricular activities can easily overwhelm and distract

even the most committed student.

To succeed today, students must be able to process, internalize and remember material. Knowing how to study is fundamental to this endeavor. Yet, many middle and high school students do not know how to go about it. Why? The reasons are as varied as there are students. Some do not know the mechanics of distinguishing between main ideas and supportive details. Some are too distracted to fully engage. Others have no idea how to be active participants in the learning process. Still others are overwhelmed and lose motivation.

The innovation in study skills today is that there is no longer a single approach to learning. Many different tools and strategies can be used, together, layered, or separately, to fully engage and enhance student learning. Using skills that tap into and encourage natural intellectual curiosity is the most effective, but not all students know what to do, or how to begin. Encourage your student to start thinking about how these strategies might be applied, how they can support the studying, learning and retention process; how they can help the student be fully present in his or her education, ultimately resulting in a love of learning.

IMAGINATION: Imagination is that quality used to visualize that which does not yet exist. Imagination is the ability to see and understand with a 360° view. Creativity is based on imagination. A powerful way to stimulate thought is by using visuals. This is a powerful way to illuminate, illustrate, clarify and conceptualize ideas. Knowing how to use pictures and graphics enhances learning, strengthens memory and promotes creativity.



INNOVATION: Innovation means doing things differently. Increasingly, the ability to approach material in new and different ways is the defining skill needed for success in school and in life. Being innovative means being creative and focusing on finding new ways to study, such as game playing, peer teaching, and using tools found on the Internet.

INVESTIGATION: An inquisitive student is an actively engaged student. Asking questions is an essential study skill because it actively pulls the student into the conversation, stimulates thought, and supports self-advocacy in the process.

INITIATION: Because assignments are often posted on school websites, many students believe that they no longer have to take a longer view to plan or prepare their assignments in advance, or manage their time. This is a mistake. Organization in thought and execution requires discipline and dedication. The process of breaking down an assignment into smaller chunks and scheduling each piece over time is key to the successful completion of a project. Taking the initiative to scope out assignments, organize and schedule them, will increase organization, promote focus, and alleviate the stress caused by not being prepared.

The majority of students want to do well in school for themselves, their parents and their teachers. Without an arsenal of learning strategies, however, many become increasingly frustrated in direct proportion to their increasing workloads; creating stress, frustration and lost motivation.

The learning benefits of imagination, innovation, investigation and initiation are easy to understand as they provide a complete, active and engaged approach to studying and learning. The key to student success is to unleash and weave these characteristics into a unique learning approach. Making sure they have the tools, systems and strategies will help accomplish this objective.

When students know how to study, they are more likely to be motivated. Motivation is the source of student success, providing momentum, interest and enthusiasm needed to reach and exceed goals. Motivated students are in action: when they know how to study, they can actually enjoy it. And when they enjoy it, there is no limit to their imagination, innovation, investigation and initiation. •



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