

Learning Tips for the School Age Student

There are many simple tips that can help a student retain new information. A few will be listed here.

1. Cataloging new information

There are many students who struggle with a style of learning in the classroom. There are two ways of learning; Whole to piece or piece to whole. This is a simplistic description for styles of processing new information. A whole type of thinker pictures the end of the project—the big picture and then breaks down the tasks needed to get to the end result. A piece to whole thinker works from the smaller tasks and builds to the end of the project. A piece thinker might take an assignment: “Study a chapter of a book” in the following way—

A. Read the first page

List 1, 2, 3 All the key ideas of each paragraph

B. Read the next page , etc.

C. This is called outlining and is very linear (Page 1, then 2, then 3 etc.

A whole thinker might study the chapter in this way:

Read the whole chapter, then map out all the key ideas as the student perceives importance of the ideas

He might draw a circle of the main idea of the chapter in the middle of the page. Off in different directions, he would list key ideas that support the main idea of the chapter like the planets circling around the sun or linked like spokes of a wheel. If a child is not taught both ways of listing information, they may get frustrated with trying to use a style that is not a natural learning tool for them.

2. Using dominant parts of the body to best use.

Each student has a dominant hand, ear, eye, brain side. It is well known now that if a child has a tendency to be Left handed, he should be allowed to be L handed. The dominant ear should be identified and for best learning, the child should be seated in the classroom so that the dominant ear is toward the teacher. A child with a L dominant ear would do best sitting on the Right side of the room. He surely would have difficulty if he were seated with his L. ear next to the doorway to the hallway.

3. Eye Glare.

Some children have sensitive eyes and are not aware of their sensitivity. They may see the world in a different perception than other people. Since they do not know how others see the world, it becomes a problem without a remedy. A child may pass a vision test which is a test of each eye separately, and have a problem with the 2 eyes teaming together. Some optometrists can test for how a child uses their eyes. They can prescribe special glasses to train the eyes to work together. They can also do visual training sessions to help a child read more efficiently.

One simple tip to try if a child reads very deliberately with choppy, slow, laborious word decoding—colored overlays. By placing a colored transparency over a page, the text may be easier to read. Colors to try are grey, yellow, soft blue. Another tip to try is a straight edge under the line of the text. This might help for children who lose their place at the edge of the paper going from one line to the next.

Most important for parents to understand is that children want to learn, and please both the parent and the teacher. When a child works hard and gets poor results, they will quickly learn that they might as well not try. Schools are getting better at structuring the classroom so that all students can use their best learning styles, but this is somewhat new knowledge. A parent might need to seek out information and assistance in their particular school and community for people who have learning style helps. The teacher is a good first resource to understand how your child is learning.

Screening Tools to Help Determine Motor Obstacles to Learning

I. Investigate

Eyes: To check if both eyes are working as a team

Teacher holds a pencil in front of a child about 12-15 inches from the nose.

Child tracks the pencil R-L, L.-R and convergence.

Up and down, diagonals

Can the child only move the eyes and not the head

Can the child move eyes in each direction at least 6-7 times without losing the pattern or complaining of a headache.

Without these skills, most classroom tasks will be difficult. Eye teaming must be found with both eyes working together.

Horizontal Eight formation: A simple test of midline orientation is to ask the child to make an 8 on it's side. Draw the eight for him with a correct pattern. Start in the middle and go up to the Left, up and over to the right.. If the child draws down first or makes a circle, they do not have the body awareness to cross midline.

Reading, letter formation, and math all require the ability to do this horizontal 8 pattern.

Cross midline ability: A child from age 3 up should be able to tap the R. hand on the R. knee, and the L. hand on the L. knee. The mature coordination is to be able to tap the R. hand on the L. knee, and the L. hand on the R. knee.

Better still is to be able to do elbow to opposite knee. This is a conclusive test of the ability to cross the midline.

Balance: Can a child stand in tandem for 5 seconds with back foot directly in back of the front foot, hands on the hips.

Core strength: Can a child hold the superman position with head, arms, and legs off of the ground for 20 seconds?

Can a child hold the head and shoulders off of the ground for 30 seconds.

II. Remediate

Practice all of the above mentioned tests daily for a few minutes before school and after school. It may take 6 weeks to notice changes in the classroom, but it could be sooner.

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