

# Help children develop skills to study independently



All work and no play is not a good combination for kids, so make sure your children get ample breaks in between revision sessions to recharge. PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

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## 3 “So many topics, so little time.”

Some pupils may struggle to allocate time effectively for revision, leading to last-minute cramming or avoiding their books, Dr Lee observes.

Guide your children to set study goals and teach them time-management techniques, such as breaking tasks into smaller ones and setting deadlines, she adds.

Dr Wong says that daily practice can be beneficial for reinforcing learning and building good study habits, but vary the schedule according to your kids' needs.

Ultimately, give them independence in planning a consistent routine that works for them.

“It allows them to take ownership of their learning,” she says.

## 4 “I don't know how to do this.”

Encourage your children to identify and place tasks under the broad categories of “I can do this” and “I need help”, Dr Yeap suggests.

Guide them on the difficult ones, but do not attempt to cover too many.

“They may get overwhelmed,” he says. “Tell them, ‘Let's work on this today; we will handle the rest another time.’”

“It is even better if they pick the one that they want to deal with.”

For maths, you can teach your kids to organise the questions by difficulty levels: the basic, the familiar and, finally, the challenging ones.

“Make it explicit that their goal is to master the first two types. The third kind? We try our best. Sometimes we succeed, often we don't – and that's okay.”



Set rules for when your kids are allowed to use their devices. PHOTO: ST FILE

At some point, let them choose if they want you or their teachers to help them.

Seeking help from their teachers takes confidence. Many kids see this as a weakness and an embarrassing act.

“Try not to let this mindset take root,” he says. “I do not know any teacher who will not help a kid who asks for help.”

“As a teacher, I am always impressed by such children.”

## 5 “I'm not sure where to start, what to study.”

If you usually sit with your children to supervise them while they study, consider cutting down on the habit, Dr Wong says.

Meanwhile, do not use your phone when you are at their study space as that will be distracting to them. Do your own work or reading.

The age that your kids can be left to revise alone depends on their personalities, levels of maturity and academic abilities.

Take on a supportive role instead to facilitate the process, such as providing a distraction-free learning environment, offering encouragement and being there if they have questions.

“Ultimately, your goal is to help your children develop the skills and confidence to study independently as they advance in their education,” she says.

If your kids feel insecure about not having you by their side, try telling them: “When studying on your own and figuring out certain things, it is like completing a level on your favourite game. You feel proud of yourself and become more confident in what you can do.”

## 6 “I don't understand why we have to learn this.”

Learning will be more meaningful if children see the relevance and value of the subject or topic, says Dr Lee.

For instance, let them know how important English is in their everyday communication with others, particularly in a multiracial society like Singapore's.

Mastering the language also opens doors to future academic pursuits and career opportunities such as journalism, teaching and law.

## 7 “Wait, I need to check my phone first.”

Would you rather scroll socials on your phone than be stuck with mundane tasks? The answer is clear for your kids too.

Help them stay focused by removing gadgets and other distractions from their study space, which should ideally be quiet and well-lit, Dr Wong says.

Discuss with your children and set rules for when they are allowed to use their devices. Work this into their revision plan.

## 8 “But I'm very tired.”

Your kids' well-being and childhood should not be sacrificed even when it comes to high-stakes exams like the PSLE.

Their daily routine should include breaks, so they can do things they enjoy and also rest.

Having regular exercise, sufficient sleep and balanced meals is also important as these help children to concentrate and study effectively, Dr Wong says.

Dr Lee adds that you can teach them relaxation techniques, such as deep-breathing exercises and listening to calming music, to manage anxiety.

## 9 “No matter how hard I try, I can't remember the formulas or focus.”

Teach your kids study habits such as organising information, note-taking and summarising, says Dr Wong.

When they are stressed, it can also impact their ability to acquire and retain information. Be supportive and let your kids feel comfortable expressing themselves and asking for help.

Kids with learning disabilities, such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder or dyslexia, may find it harder to stay on task.

If you notice persistent challenges that hinder your children's ability to study independently, consult their teachers, school counsellors or educational psychologists, who can offer strategies and intervention.