



## Tips and Techniques Study/Homework Routine

Scripture Verse: *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needed not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* (2 Tim. 2:15, KJV)

**Grades:** 1-12

**Overview:** Although studying is an essential ingredient in being successful in school, it is one of those behaviors that often results in much conflict in the home, as parents attempt to get Johnny and Susie to do their homework, practice their spelling words, prepare for quizzes and tests. For many families, doing homework is a real hassle. Yet, when properly structured, a quality study time instills self-discipline, good time management skills, and reduces the gap between perceived study time and actual study time. In our survey of over 500 students and their parents regarding the amount of time spent doing homework, there was a 2 to 1 time ratio. That is, when the parent reported that Johnny spent 20 minutes studying and doing homework, Johnny reported 10 minutes. In other words, fifty percent of the time was preoccupied with other behaviors, rather than true study; for example, thinking about other non-homework related things, listening to radio, TV, talking on the phone, manipulating study materials, etc.

The following routine was adapted from Madsen and Madsen, "*Parents and Children Love and Discipline*" (1975) and has been used effectively to maximize study time both at school and in the home. This method is especially effective for students who desire to raise their grade in a particular subject.

### Set a Study Goal

Check with your child's teacher to find out the average amount of time expected to be spent on homework. For example, K4-K5 15 minutes, grades 1-2 30 minutes, grades 3-5 40 minutes, grades 6-8 15 minutes per subject, and grades 9-12 20 minutes per subject. Check to see if the teacher provides a handout concerning homework. In a departmentalized school system each teacher must consider the amount of homework he gives in light of what is likely to be given by other teachers. Even when homework is not given, it is important for parents to establish a study routine that can be used for drill and review. Caution must also be given to the total amount of study time so that study does not become weariness to the flesh (Ecclesiastes 12:12 "*And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much **study** is a weariness of the flesh.*" KJV)

### Concentration

The important aspects of study are on-task concentration and repetition of materials not-fully learned. Concentration is enhanced when the student talks to himself, asking oneself questions and answering as the material is studied. Keeping track of the types of distracting thoughts and behaviors by writing these down on a study card will help the student guard against these distractions.

### Study Place

When used in a school setting, the student picks a "study-place" where only study would take place (study halls, library, conference room, etc). In the home where other members of family use the same spot, only the student who has difficulty studying should study there

and nowhere else in the house. Choose a straight-backed chair and table and place the chair facing a corner or blank wall. Have the student construct signs warning family members to stay away during study time. All distractions need to be eliminated, such as, cell phones, radios, TV, or anything else that would interfere with effective study. Only one book or one set of most materials should be taken to the study place for each study session or segment.

## **Distraction cards**

Student uses 3 x 5 inch cards labeled as to date, time started, time finished, session number as well as open space for distractions (distracting thoughts or interruptions). Student chooses a pleasant activity to engage in during break times (reading, eating, listening to radio with ear phones, check text messages, use phone to talk with friends, etc.), get materials ready, remove watches and other indicator of time, fill in above card, set kitchen timer for six minutes, and begins to study. Whenever the student is distracted in anyway (defined by student to help teach discrimination between on-task and off-task behavior), the student marks in space provided for distractions and also writes in longhand at the bottom of card, "Get back to work." After having first noticed a distraction (competing sound, daydreaming, thinking of others, etc.), the initial inclination is to go back to work; writing a little note "Get back to work" prevents this for a moment and serves to make concentration more desirable, discriminations more complete

## **Timer**

When the timer rings (or parent/teacher cues student), student stands up immediately, takes timer (if used), and moves away from study area, resets timer for two minutes, then engages in "fun" activity until the timer again sounds; whereupon student goes through same routine filling in a new card. This procedure is repeated until total time period allotted for the study passes. Student changes from six- minute study session to nine-minute study session when the number of distraction marks (and corresponding self-written work instructions) numbers three or fewer.

## **Study schedules**

Student is permitted three-minute break for nine-minute study period. Each time the distracters is reduced to two or below, the student moves up the scale (study six, break two; study nine, break three; study twelve, break four; study fifteen, break five; study eighteen, break six; study twenty-one, break seven; study twenty-four, break eight; study twenty-seven, break nine; study thirty, break ten; study thirty-three, break eleven; study thirty-six, break twelve; study thirty-nine, break thirteen; study forty-two, break fourteen; study forty-five, break fifteen) until reaching maximum. The student is strongly encouraged to never study longer than forty-five minutes while using fifteen-minute break for pleasant activities. This routine builds strong study skills as well as gives approval rewards following each small study session.

## **External rewards**

Teachers and parents may use extra incentives (activities and privileges – See Tips and Techniques "Approval Responses") for moving up the study scale while maintaining absolute honesty. The emphasis is placed on a routine which doesn't start with amount of homework to be finished but with amount of time to study. When no homework is available or required, the student should use this study time to review materials for tests.