

**Homework:**  
**The Good, the Bad,**  
**&**  
**the Inquiry**



"I CAN'T COME OUT. I HAVE TO HELP  
MY DAD WITH MY HOMEWORK."

**Calgary Science School**

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## SOS Strategies for Success

- checklists** in agenda binder - may be used as part of the daily routine or for specific assignments
- chunking** assignments - break assignments into 'bite size' pieces and use a checklist
- flow chart** - a diagram or map that starts with the assignment and shows each step along the way
- record** assignments in agenda – write only the key words to remind yourself of W,W,W,W,W, & H
- e-mail** assignments home - send all details, websites, due dates and related materials to yourself and/or your parents
- check the CSS **website** – know how to access your class link for assignment information
- ask** for help when needed – ask the teacher, a parent, or older sibling for help after you've tried yourself
- classroom **buddy** – find someone in your class you can call
- set schoolwork **time** each day at home – what time will you do your work each day and for how long
- set schoolwork **place** at home – where will you do your schoolwork and keep all your supplies
- regular binder **organization** – make sure everything is in the right place; use dividers that are labeled; fasten all loose papers as they are given to you
- unpack, repack **backpack** – if you reorganize your backpack every day you will keep track of homework and notices
- daily **review** – even if there isn't assigned 'homework, summarize what was covered in class
- use **memory** techniques – mnemonics, rhymes, word association, concentration games
- Other** strategies...

## The DETER Strategy for Taking Tests

To do well on a test, you must have good knowledge of the information that is being tested. But you must also have a strategy for taking the test that allows you to show what you know. The DETER strategy can help you do your best on any test. Each letter in DETER reminds you what to do.

### **D = Directions**

1. Read the test directions very carefully.
2. Ask your teacher to explain anything about the test directions you do not understand.
3. Only by following the directions can you achieve a good score on the test.
4. If you do not follow the directions, you will not be able to demonstrate what you know.

### **E = Examine**

1. Examine the entire test to see how much you have to do.
2. Only by knowing the entire task can you break it down into parts that become manageable for you.

### **T = Time**

1. Once you have examined the entire test, decide how much time you will spend on each item.
2. If there are different points for items, plan to spend the most time on the items that count for the most points.
3. Planning your time is especially important for essay tests where you must avoid spending so much time on one item that you have little time left for other test items.

### **E = Easiest**

1. The second **E** in DETER reminds you to answer the items you find easiest first.
2. If you get stuck on a difficult item that comes up early in the test, you may not get to answer items that test things you know.

### **R = Review**

1. If you have planned your time correctly, you will have time to review your answers and make them as complete and accurate as possible.
2. Also make sure to review the test directions to be certain you have answered all items required.

Using the DETER strategy will help you do better on tests and get better grades.

## **Working Memory Strategies**

### **Organization**

Like the directories and sub-directories in your computer, you must find a way of filing information that you are trying to learn. Learn from the general to the specific. Get an overview of your subject first. Look for the main idea and conclusions, then organize the information and examples that lead to those broader thoughts.

### **Repetition**

Without repetition, most people can only recall about 20% of selected material after a 24 hour period. By simply reviewing material once after class to clarify and confirm what you have heard, and once again later that day or evening, that figure improves significantly.

### **Visualization / Association**

New data can be recalled more easily if it is stored near old data. New data can be recalled easily if you can see how it compares with other ideas (association), or if you can create a picture or diagram of it (visualization). For example, by visualizing a computer and associating this theory of learning with your computer's RAM and filing system, you can easily recall and explain the human memory process.

### **Recitation / Explanation**

Of all memory techniques, recitation works best. Put things into your own words; explain it to a friend or classmate. The combination of having the idea in your head, the words in your throat, and the sound in your ears, is synergistic. It's more than just one way of encoding information. It's three different ways of creating neural traces for the same information and its recall.

### **Distribution**

Marathon study sessions on one topic are not as effective as numerous, short, intensive efforts. Take regular breaks; study something else. Distribute your study and learning sessions throughout the day (the exception is when you become so engrossed in writing a paper that you can't stop).

### **Combination**

Combine memory techniques to create a multi-modal encoding process. For example, flash cards work well because you can use them repeatedly, at different times of the day, see the stimulus word and hear yourself explain the answer. (That's repetition, distribution, visualization and explanation combined.)

### **Mnemonic Devices**

Mnemonic devices are new words, acronyms, or creative sentences to which you have tied the information you wish to recall. New words or acronyms are created typically by using the first letter of a series of words: NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), SCUBA (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) and ROY G. BIV (for the visible spectrum) are classic examples. Creative sentences, like "every good boy does fine" allow for easy recall of the musical notes on the lines of a treble staff.

## Learning Style Inventory

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Homeroom: \_\_\_\_\_

To better understand how you prefer to learn and process information, place a check in the appropriate space after each statement below, then use the scoring key on the next page to evaluate your responses. Use what you learn from your scores to better develop learning strategies that are best suited to your particular learning style. This 24-item survey is not timed. Respond to each statement as honestly as you can.

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
1. I can remember best about a subject by listening to a lecture that includes information, explanations and discussion.			
2. I prefer to see information written on a whiteboard and supplemented by visual aids and reading.			
3. I like to write things down or to take notes for visual review.			
4. I prefer to use posters, models, or actual practice and other activities in class.			
5. I require explanations of diagrams, graphs, or visual directions.			
6. I enjoy working with my hands or making things.			
7. I am skillful with and enjoy developing and making graphs and charts.			
8. I can tell if sounds match when presented with pairs of sounds.			
9. I can remember best by writing things down several times.			
10. I can easily understand and follow directions on a map.			
11. I do best in core subjects by listening to the teacher talking.			
12. If I can, I play with toys or doodle on a piece of paper during class.			
13. I learn to spell better by repeating words out loud than by writing the words on paper.			
14. I can understand a news article better by reading about it in the newspaper than by listening to a report about it on the radio.			
15. I chew gum or snack while studying or doing homework.			

	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
16. I think the best way to remember something is to picture it in your head.			
17. I learn the spelling of words by "finger spelling" them.			
18. I would rather listen to the teacher talk than read about the same material in a textbook.			
19. I am good at working and solving jigsaw puzzles and mazes.			
20. I grip objects in my hands during learning periods.			
21. I prefer listening to the news on the radio rather than reading about it in the newspaper.			
22. I prefer obtaining information about an interesting subject by reading about it.			
23. I feel very comfortable touching others, hugging, handshaking, etc.			
24. I follow oral directions better than written ones.			

### Learning Style Inventory

#### Scoring Procedures

**DIRECTIONS :** Place the point value on the line next to the corresponding item below. Add the points in each column to obtain the preference score under each heading.

Often = 5

Sometimes = 3

Seldom = 1

VISUAL		AUDITORY		TACTILE	
NO.	PTS.	NO.	PTS.	NO.	PTS.
2	_____	1	_____	4	_____
3	_____	5	_____	6	_____
7	_____	8	_____	9	_____
10	_____	11	_____	12	_____
14	_____	13	_____	15	_____
16	_____	18	_____	17	_____
19	_____	21	_____	20	_____
22	_____	24	_____	23	_____
VPS =	_____	APS =	_____	TPS =	_____

## **Interpreting Your Learning Style**

**If you are a VISUAL learner**, by all means be sure that you look at all study materials. Use charts, maps, notes, videos, and flash cards. Practice visualizing or picturing words and concepts in your head. Write out everything for frequent and quick visual review.

**If you are an AUDITORY learner**, you may wish to use tapes. Tape lectures to help fill in gaps in your notes. But do listen and take notes - and review your notes frequently. Sit in the classroom where you can hear well. After you have read something, summarize it and recite it aloud. Talk to other students about class material.

**If you are a TACTILE learner**, trace words as you are saying them. Facts that must be learned should be written several times. Keep a supply of scratch paper on hand for this purpose. Taking and keeping lecture notes is very important. Make study sheets. Associate class material with real-world things or occurrences. When appropriate, practice role-playing.

## **Nurture your child's scholastic success**

### **Help your children set and achieve realistic academic goals**

By Paola Breda

Let's face it: all kids are not created equal. And with varied personalities also comes varied learning strengths and weaknesses. While one of our kids may be the class browner, the other may end up being the class clown. As parents, it is important to understand how to handle each situation.

How do we encourage one of our kids without discouraging the other? How can we reward the kid that got that well-earned C, without always having to reward the one that comes home with straight As -- not having worked at all?

#### **Reward the goal achieved, not the grade received.**

The solution is to build up a system of goals and rewards that is not specifically related to marks. For example, if your bookworm child needs to work on a broader social life, you could set up a reward for five successful social arrangements. On the other hand, if your athletic kid (who never bothers to open his book and is content with a C) attains his goal of a hard-earned B, then he gets his reward. In this way, you're rewarding the goal attained, not necessarily the mark achieved -- dependent only on what you know each kid needs to work on.

If you just have one child who's having trouble with a particular subject, then the goal and reward could be tied to that subject only. For example, you could say, "When you learn the eight times table, I'll be so proud of you, AND we can even...[fill in your child's favourite thing to do, or the next thing he wants]. We can even write a special agreement between us and post it on the fridge." You could turn the whole thing into a learning experience about agreements, signatures, witnesses, dates, etc.

#### **Coach your child with strategies**

Be sure to make a commitment to help your child reach his achieved goal. Find out exactly where his problem is and guide him towards strategies which will 'zero in' on solving that particular problem. Make it fun instead of drudgery. If it's a times table memory problem, make up fun exercises to assist memory: sing a rap song every morning on your drive (or walk) to school, sing the rap song every night while setting the table together, or at bedtime.

If your child seems to stumble along in many academic areas and for a prolonged period of time, start problem-solving as early as possible. Don't wait for your child's teacher to tell you about it. Look for clues that may point to the source of your child's academic struggles:

- Could my child have a learning disability? Call your local learning disabilities association or arrange for a psycho-educational test to be done through your local school board or a privately-owned institution.
- Could my child possibly have a visual or auditory problem? Have your child's eyes and ears tested. Hearing and visual problems make it difficult for anyone to learn.

Remember that some auditory and visual problems go undetected, but can cause academic problems.

- Is there something else going on that might affect academic achievement? Make a date and talk to your child. Sometimes if we just listen, we can get the answer directly from our children. Maybe it's a bully at school, or a problem with a particular teacher.
- Does my child have unnecessary stress? Review your child's life; review what it's like to be him. Go through his day mentally. What could you change to make his life easier, or less stressful? Maybe he has too much structure or not enough for his particular personality. Maybe he's just too busy.
- Do they need a change? Try to alter the way they're being taught. Some kids are not visual or rote learners, so writing and rewriting their spelling-list words may not work for them. Instead, make up a song, write in the sand, write with finger paint, cut out sandpaper letters, use flash card letters, or try whatever else it takes to change the way the material is presented. This will give stronger parts of the brain a crack at the problem.

Remember that most academic problems are short-term, related to a specific subject or task, and pass without much impact on the child's life. Fortunately, most of us eventually do memorize mundane things like our multiplication tables.

**About the author:** Paola Breda runs the [Gap Academy](#), a Toronto school for kids with learning disabilities.

**Quiz on Quizzes**  
(created by Dan McWilliam – grade 6 Humanities teacher)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The answer to this question refers to an...
  - A. Overture
  - B. Mountain
  - C. Building
  - D. Misnomer
  
2. In which pifflerock did the zorkrans inkle?
  - A. Calgary
  - B. Edmonton
  - C. Red Deer
  - D. Gishen Fronks
  
3. If there were a question here, which would likely be the correct answer?
  - A. Vanquished
  - B. Victorious
  - C. Conquered
  - D. Defeated
  
4. Who invented the lava lamp?
  - A. Edward Craven Walker
  - B. Stephen Harper
  - C. Hillary Duff
  - D. King Tut
  
5. Dome ukerland dimmel?
  - A. Nepal
  - B. Canada
  - C. Britian
  - D. United States
  
6. He was the first race walker to be inducted into the National Track and Field Hall of Fame?
  - A. Georgia O'Connor, in 1989
  - B. Cynthia Zackowski, in 1987
  - C. Ron Laird, in 1986
  - D. Frieda Nachnamen, in 1988
  
7. What is the approximate pulse rate of the average hibernating woodchuck?
  - A. 8 ml
  - B. 4 per minute
  - C. 15 cm/hour
  - D. 25 days

**8. Enzebulon, gorf lem sneeze?**

- A. Henkledorf**
- B. Ricktoffen**
- C. Ifetain**
- D. Krator**

**9. The answer to this question, if it were a question, would be a ...**

- A. Yogurt tube**
- B. Antelope**
- C. Egg plant**
- D. Oblong obelisk**

**10. When you finish a test you should...**

- A. Review your answers**
- B. Make sure your name is on it**
- C. Go back to the tough questions you circled**
- D. All of the above**

## Resources

### Text

Alberta Education (1998). The Parent Advantage. (Available from the Learning Resource Center)

Barber, J., Parizeau, N., & Bergman, L. (2002). Spark Your Child's Success in Math and Science. Berkeley, CA: The Regents of the University of California.

Levine, Mel (2002). A Mind At A Time. Toronto: Simon and Schuster.

Levine, Mel (2003). The Myth of Laziness. Toronto: Simon and Schuster.

Paul, Kevin (2003). Study Smarter, Not Harder. North Vancouver, BC: Self-Counsel Press

Rosemond, John K. (1990). Ending the Homework Hassle. Kansas City: Universal Press Syndicate Company.

### Web-based

Figure This! Family Math Challenges  
<http://www.figurethis.org/>

Learning Differences  
<http://www.allkindsofminds.org/learningBase.aspx>

Alberta Education (1996). Working Together in Mathematics Education.  
[http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k\\_12/curriculum/ParentResources.asp](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/ParentResources.asp)

Human Memory [http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751\\_97\\_winter/Topics/human-cap/memory.html](http://www.cc.gatech.edu/classes/cs6751_97_winter/Topics/human-cap/memory.html)

Test Anxiety [http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/school\\_jobs/school/test\\_anxiety.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/school/test_anxiety.html)