

How To Win the School Game

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You've done everything that you know how to do to help your child be successful in school. You provide support and encouragement at home, read to your child, play educational games, study all the right books and articles about education, and take an active interest in your child's classwork. You are certain that this year is going to be your child's best ever in school.

Despite your best efforts however, did you know that the odds are against your child receiving good grades in school? Less than 25% of the students will receive A's and B's.

The reason is that your child's learning style may be very different from the school's testing styles. When your child learns in a different style from how he or she is tested, the mismatch often results in lower grades than your child actually deserves. The school's written tests are actually catering to only one type of learner and the learning/testing mismatch does not allow your child to demonstrate what he or she truly knows.

Although schools give written testing beginning in the first grade, very few children actually understand the "testing rules." The least expensive way for the school to determine mastery of a subject is the written test. If your child has learned the material in another way, perhaps by practicing aloud or building a model, it is difficult to translate that type of learning into the written form. Your child's natural learning style is their unique gift. But the school written testing model does not make room for every style. Students may not be able to show how much they know because the school's written testing programs are not likely to change simply to meet your child's learning needs.

Don't be discouraged though, because there are several things that you can do to increase the odds of your child's success in school. You can even give him or her a "learning edge" by developing each of the three learning styles (picturing, listening, feeling) so they can use whichever style is more appropriate for the task at hand.

You can provide the most help by first discovering how your child prefers to learn. You can do this easily by asking yourself a few questions which will reveal their natural learning style. (You can also give your child the [Personal Learning Style Inventory](#)).

1. Does your child love reading? Is his or her room usually tidy and is it important to them that they dress neatly? Is their school notebook organized and assignments neatly written? When your child is speaking, does he or she often say things like "I see, I get the picture"? If you answered yes to each of these questions, your child has a visual or picture learning style. This student usually gets the very best grades because their way of learning precisely matches the school's way of teaching and testing. The visual learner takes in, stores and recalls information in the form of pictures. Written testing requires a person to recall what was learned in a picture format so that it can be easily translated into written symbols (pictures) on the test.

2. Does your child love music, know all the words to the current songs, repeat their lessons out loud in order to learn them, and tell good stories? Do they spend hours on the phone and always have lots to say? Can your child usually repeat exactly what you have said to them (even several days or weeks later?) If so, your child learns best by listening and repeating and is an auditory learner. Unfortunately, these children do not easily make pictures in their minds and of course most testing is not conducted out loud.

3. Is your child good at sports? Does he or she love to put things together and make things with their hands? Is reading a chore and writing especially difficult? Is their room disorganized and school papers messy? Are assignments often lost or misplaced? Does your child speak at a slower pace and generally talk about how they feel? If most of these things are true, this child is a kinesthetic (physical) learner and learns best with their body. He or she almost never makes "pictures" of new or stored information in their mind and therefore has an unusually hard time translating what they know into the written, pictorial form. More often than not, these children, although very bright, receive the lowest grades. The school model actually penalizes

this type of learner by rarely allowing assignments or testing to be completed in the kinesthetic style. This child, who makes up at least 33% or more of the school population, is hopelessly lost in a school system which almost never allows his or her talents to be rewarded in the classroom testing and grading system.

Once you have discovered your child's preferred learning style, (and of course they may have characteristics from more than one) the second way to increase the odds for better grades are to tell your child that visual or written tests are probably here to stay. Teaching and testing children exclusively in the style in which they learn may actually disempower them by only building one of their strengths. And, although learning theories such as Dr. Howard Gardner's seven types of intelligence are good, the school day does not usually provide teachers the extra time to design, teach and test in each of those seven learning styles. Once your child understands that school testing will only be conducted in one of those learning styles, you can then begin to teach the following "visual" or picture learning strategies to your child which will increase the odds for higher grades.

When your child is reading, tell him or her to look up and create pictures of what they read. Good readers turn all the black and white symbols on the page into images. That way, they can easily recall the pictures during the test. It's important that your child physically lift their head and eyes upward when they create, store and retrieve these images. Adding color and movement also improves their creative imagination, recall and grades.

Next, for subjects like spelling and math facts, have your child make note cards with different colors for odd letters in the words or difficult math facts and hold them up above their eye level when studying. This insures that the physical, kinesthetic and auditory learners create images of the new information so that it can be easily recalled during the test. Tell your child to look up and remember their note cards during their test.

Finally, when taking notes from a text book, create "mind maps" of the new information. Using lots of colors, draw a circle in the center of the page and put the title of the chapter inside the circle. Then place other circles outside and around the one in the center. Within each circle, write a few key words and draw pictures to represent as much information as possible. This makes learning easier, faster and more fun and provides a brain-friendly strategy for successful learning in pictures.

Most important of all, give your child the gift of believing in himself or herself. Teach them from birth that all children are smart and that they can learn and be whatever they choose. Bathe them in their own uniqueness and let them know that school measures only a very small part of their "smartness." Being smart is really only a set of skills and strategies that any person can implement, once given the information on how to use each of the learning styles whenever they choose. Read on to find out how to help your child think in the same "visual" or picture learning style that the school will test in.

THE EYES HAVE IT - LOOK UP FOR BETTER GRADES!

When you want your child to get higher grades, you can help by having your child add the same "visual" or picture learning style that the school will test in. It's easy because your child will simply learn how to create and remember pictures they are already making in their mind. Here's how.

First, ask your child to remember something which requires that they see a picture in order to answer the question. For example, "What does your best friend look like? Make a picture in your mind and tell me all the physical details." As you are asking the question, observe the *upward* left or right corner direction your child moves his or her eyes to when recalling a picture. If your child does not look up, keep asking similar types of questions until they do. Additional questions are "What was your friend wearing yesterday? Describe a scene from your favorite movie", etc. (Do not tell your child at first what you are watching for. You will tell them later.) Once you know which side your child looks to when recalling a picture, you can have your child look up to that same side when studying and recalling information for tests in school. Teach your child to turn information to be studied into as many pictures as possible. Then place those pictures in the upper left or upper right picture memory location. When test time comes in the classroom, tell your child to look up to that same left or right side so they can easily see the pictures that they made while studying. Remember - one picture is worth a thousand words and your child can choose the visual learning style strategy which matches the school's testing style. The results are better grades and increased self-esteem for your child!

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