

**Parenting Discussion Group Article & Questions  
For Parents of Children 7 -12 yrs**

**Topic: Studying and learning how to do it**

**Article:** Learning how to study, Perspective Magazine, Adapted from Hacer Familia

Please read the following article and then answer the questions at the end of this document.

The Parenting Discussion group should not run for longer than an hour. If you have any feedback about this topic or the questions used please forward your comments to [elisabeth@familyeducation.org.au](mailto:elisabeth@familyeducation.org.au)

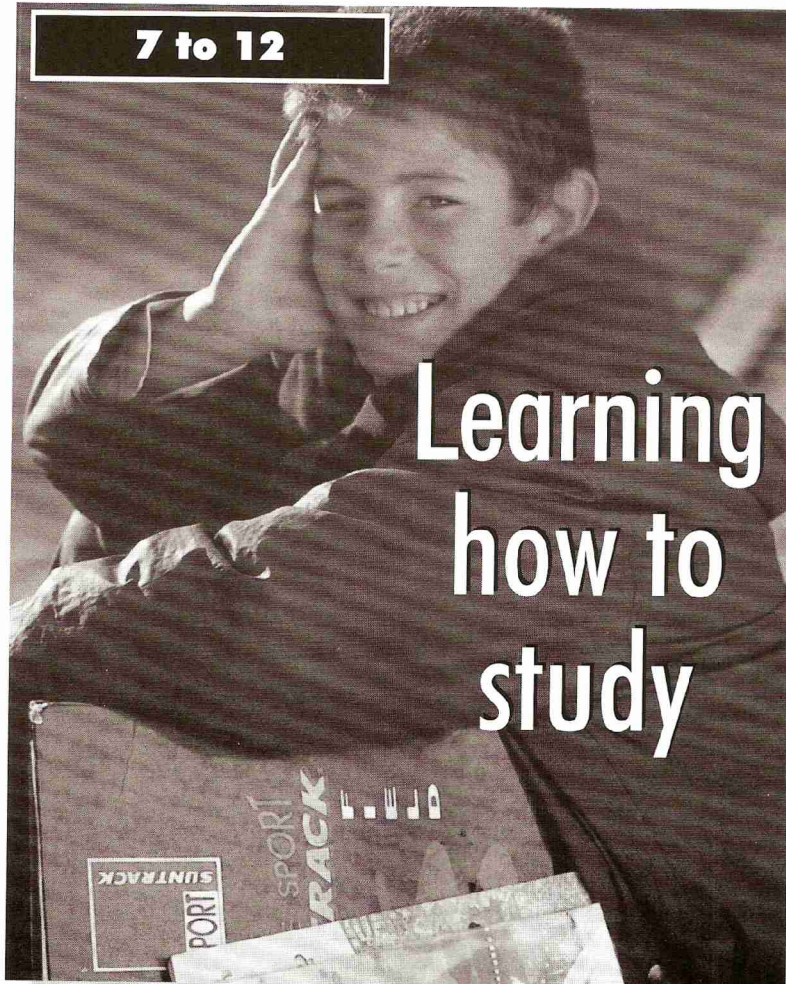
**How to Manage the Small Group**

- select a leader for the session
- know the time limit and organise time accordingly. Leave time for summing up at the end.
- try to include everyone without letting someone dominate
- don't let people talk too much about their own children.
- avoid unnecessary digressions. This can be done by refocusing the group's attention back on the question and using questions like:
  - "What does everyone else think?"
  - "Does everyone agree?"
  - "What about.....?" or
  - "Do you think....?"

# YOUR kids



7 to 12



## Learning how to study

Here is a case study about study. Eight-year-old Ewan was a very cheerful, lively, active child who found doing homework one of the worst moments of his day. His parents felt strongly that his marks did not reflect his ability and decided on a plan to help him to study regularly.

They chatted things over and came up with an original plan. Like most boys, Ewan adored his Dad. He liked to imitate him, dress like him and talk like him. In comparison with his brothers and sisters, he was also a bit vain and like to put a bit of a front.

With all this in mind, Mum and Dad created "Ewan's office". They put a sign on his bedroom,

"Ewan's Office. Please Knock." On his desk went another: "Ewan Works Here. Nobody Else." They invested in a pencil case and a lever arch file.

Along with the new furnishings went a little speech. "Ewan, you're growing up now and the work you are doing isn't just study. It is real work. The time you spend in your office is just as important for you as the time Dad spends in his office."

Naturally, Ewan was thrilled. On the first Monday and Tuesday of the new system, he raced home from school, had a quick afternoon tea, changed his clothes and set to work straight away in his office. But on Wednesday – as you

might have expected – he told his mother that he was too tired to do his homework.

This, of course, was what Mum had expected. "I know that you are a bit tired today, but people who do serious work in an office like Dad often get tired and they do it anyway. If you want to be like Dad, you have to make an effort and work even if you don't feel like it."

This convinced Ewan to give it a go. Bit by bit, he acquired a genuine habit of study in order to be like Dad and stick to his job.

A strategy like this may not work for every child, but it is important to note that the foundations for a positive approach to study are laid before a child is 11 or 12. Even as young as 7 or 8 is not too early to help them get motivated in their schoolwork and homework.

But most children need their parents' help in this. Bad and ineffective ways of studying discourage children, while good and effective ways fill them with enthusiasm. And it is not likely that they will learn how to do this only at school. The home environment is essential to learn how to plan out work, make a timetable, and keep motivated from start to finish.

How can parents help? Certainly by giving children pointers about features of their schoolwork which they failed to learn in class. But also by tutoring them in how to manage their work, because academic success (as in nearly any area of life) is due as much to virtue as to talent.

A capacity to concentrate is fundamental in learning how to study. Here you can be of great assistance. Reading is a great way to develop this. Perhaps they can start their homework time with 10 or 15 minutes reading as a warm-

up for more demanding tasks. Since the attention span of an 8-year-old is very short, it is a good idea to help them to study and memorise for 15 to 30 minutes before starting on written work or projects.

After studying the work set by the teacher, it is a good idea for children to get into the habit of quizzing themselves. How often have you yourself read over material and forgotten it instantly? It is easy for a child to sit in front of a book without even attempting to absorb information. Until they get into the habit of doing it on their own, perhaps you can give them a hand by administering a brief quiz.

Proper surroundings are very helpful in knuckling down to homework. A young student's own bedroom may be the best place as long as an even younger brother or sister isn't playing there as well. It is important to have peace and quiet – and this means no background noise from a radio, stereo or television. It is a real torment for a child to try to study while others are watching TV.

It is also difficult to study on an empty stomach, so afternoon tea is a pillar of good study habits. Concentration becomes difficult if you feel hungry.

It is hard for some parents to be detached from their children's homework, but nagging does little good. Normal children enjoy a manageable challenge, so if a child doesn't seem to be able to study, examine the situation carefully.

The problem might be one of motivation, or bewilderment at the teacher's instructions, or a failure to understand some basic concept. In most cases, substandard performance is not necessarily due to lack of intelligence or laziness.

Instead of getting nervous, sit down with your son or daughter for 10 minutes before they begin a session of homework and talk about what they have to do. What did the teacher tell you to do? Do you know how to do it? Once the task is clear, leave them alone to do the assignment by themselves.

A timetable helps all of us to focus and concentrate. If a child just sits in front of books without a definite time for closing them, they may end up daydreaming for a substantial portion of it. It is good to set them goals so that eventually they set goals for themselves: to finish all their arithmetic problems by 6pm, to read 10 pages in the next half hour, to memorise the "times table" before tea...

Just as Ewan felt motivated by thinking of his homework as a real job like his Dad's, most of us need a definite starting and finishing time for homework. Straight after tea, perhaps, or immediately before. The circumstances of every family are different. It's very helpful to coordinate family activities so that the house is reasonably quiet while the children are doing homework. But the one rule which ought to be applied in all cases is: "Always begin on time." Never leave it for later on.

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*Adapted from "Hacer Familia"  
by Margaret-Maria Dudley. Her  
email address is  
MM\_Dudley@yahoo.com*

## *Points to ponder*

- ✓ Try to create a good study atmosphere in the home with quiet during homework times and a set timetable. This will provide the moral support that children need to confront jobs that they find difficult.
- ✓ Parents can teach children valuable study skills, especially the ability to pace oneself. Begin with an easy task, like reading, then the more demanding study and memorisation, then practical exercises.
- ✓ Beware of television. From Day 1, it should be clear that homework comes before leisure.
- ✓ Parents should encourage younger children to keep quiet during the time that the school-age ones are studying. The students will feel supported by the rest of the family and the toddlers will learn to respect others' work.
- ✓ It is very important to teach children to search for the main idea in each paragraph or text. Only if you understand what you are reading can you study effectively.
- ✓ Don't compare children in their academic achievements. Everyone has his or her own level.
- ✓ Keep in close touch with your child's teachers so that you understand what is expected of them for homework.
- ✓ It is not necessarily a good idea to do homework with children. Even if you had the time, it might make them need your presence in order to apply themselves. They have to learn to work on their own.

## Questions:

Q1) Do you currently have a family timetable where all the children are required to participate? If not, discuss ways in which to introduce one and what jobs should be delegated.

Q2) Discuss what methods of study you have discussed with your child so that you can exchange ideas to help introduce new ideas to each other.

Q3) Have you sat down to help your child organise their study in the form of a timetable? If so, share your ideas of how you approach this with each other.

Q4) What do you think of offering rewards for good study habits and good exam results? Discuss ways in which you can reward and what deserves a reward and what doesn't.