



Does multitasking help you, your child accomplish tasks?



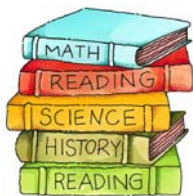
Look around your home at homework time. Is your child studying while singing to music? Are you answering his questions while checking email?

Multitasking has become a way of life, but that isn't necessarily good. In fact, while multitasking, the brain doesn't really concentrate on several tasks at once. It moves quickly from one to another, not giving anything its full attention.

To avoid multitasking mistakes:

- Prevent distractions. Choose a quiet place for your child to study--free of TV, phones and loud music. Some kids, however, may do well with background music (such as classical).
- Set a good example. It's natural to want to accomplish as much as possible--as quickly as possible. But do what really works. When you give your child undivided attention (instead of answering emails while you talk), you show him how to focus--and how important he is to you.
- Do an experiment. If you and your child doubt that multitasking makes you less effective, test it out. Choose a task that requires concentration. Then do it with and then without distractions.
- Schedule tasks. Instead of planning multiple things at once, schedule tasks consecutively. Your child can do homework at 4:00, call friends at 5:00 and clean his room at 5:30.
- Multitask mindlessly. Multitasking is okay when the activities don't require much thinking. For example, your child can eat a snack while talking on the phone with friends.

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Improve test success by building your child's reading muscles



You can't win a race if you quit before getting to the finish line. Sometimes, that's what happens when kids are taking important tests that involve a lot of reading.

There are children who simply don't have the stamina to stick with the reading passages on tests. They do fine when they are reading a short passage. But by the end of a longer test, they are simply too tired to read the information and answer the questions.

Just as athletes can increase their stamina, so can readers. You can help your child do better on tests by building his "reading muscles."

Here are some ideas:

- Schedule a regular time for your child to read. Start with a short time--perhaps only five or 10 minutes. But gradually increase the time so he can read independently for 30 minutes.
- Help your child get motivated. Have him color in a chart for every 10 minutes he spends reading. Or start a paper chain, adding a link for each 10 minutes.
- Teach your child other ways to build his stamina. Have him look up occasionally to rest his eyes. Or encourage him to take a short break, grab a snack and then go back to reading.

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