

Parenting Partners This Week

Success Starts At Home

Top Study Skills

Break It Up – Add Spacing & Variety to Your Study Time

The old question is whether we learn better and retain more with cramming or through gradual study.ⁱ What does research show?

And how about variety -- what happens when students alternate among several subjects during a study session? Can they understand the material better than when they just study one subject?

Survey

What are your children's reasons for delaying studying until the last minute?

- The movie was just so good!
- The homework isn't that hard anyway; it'll take me 45 minutes!
- My teacher just gave out the project today.
- The dog ate my class notes.

Think Tank – Brainstorming practical ideas

Gradual Study -- Adding Spacing

Do you remember material more when you learn it gradually or all at once?

What do you think of this report from the *New York Times*?

Learning material is like packing a suitcase. "If you cram it in quickly it holds its load for a while, then most everything falls out."

But "when the brain's suitcase is packed carefully and gradually, it holds its contents for far, far longer. An hour of study tonight, an hour on the weekend, another session a week from now; such so-called spacing improves later recall, without requiring students to put in more overall study effort or pay more attention, dozens of studies have found."ⁱⁱ



Have you noticed that? Sometimes after cramming students look at the test questions and panic, because the material doesn't even look remotely familiar.

How can we move our children toward gradual study to improve their memory and test results? How can your children manage their time better so that they can start studying sooner?

Better Concentration -- Adding Variety

Our minds work so rapidly that we can lose concentration when we're studying a single subject. Can we learn better while studying two subjects at once?

What happens when students alternate among several subjects during a study session? Can they understand the material better than when they just study one subject?

Researchers at the University of South Florida taught a group of fourth graders four equations. The children who studied mixed problem sets instead of one equation "did twice as well, outscoring them 77 percent to 38 percent. The researchers have found the same in experiments involving adults and younger children."ⁱⁱⁱ

So it can help to study several subjects at the same time. Just avoid getting distracted by phone and social media interruptions!

Ideas & Tools—How to get organized so that study projects start earlier

Please see our newsletter on Time Management for some tools to get organized. Look for some free charts at ParentingTools.org.

Connect with other parents on this study skill and others: Sign up for the Parenting Partners workshops at your school and join the conversation on Facebook!

ⁱ "In education, **cramming** is the practice of working intensively to absorb large volumes of informational material in short amounts of time. It is often done by students in preparation for upcoming exams, especially at the last minute. Cramming is often discouraged by educators because the hurried coverage of material tends to result in poor long-term retention of material." From Wikipedia

ⁱⁱ NY Times September 6, 2010, "Forget What You Know About Good Study Habits" by Benedict Carey.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.