

# Teach Your Child The 'Success Secret' Of Hard Work



**W**hat's the most important factor in predicting a child's success in school? Many people think it's intelligence or ability.

Yet experienced educators know that *hard work* is the real key to success in school. Students of average intelligence often get better grades—and do better in life—than those with very high IQs. The reason? They have been willing to invest the time and effort it takes to succeed.

And that's good news. It means that every child has a chance to learn the "success secret" of hard work. Here are some ways you can help instill this attitude in your child.

## **Quick Tips**

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## PLAN, DO, FINISH

**S**ome children are naturally organized. They not only finish the report on time, they also take the extra effort to make an illustrated cover.

But most kids need a little help from their parents. Teaching your child to "plan, do, finish" can help him become more organized.

### Step 1: Plan.

Although planning may seem like a waste of time, it can actually save time. Teach your child, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." Before your child starts a project, help him plan *what* he needs to do. Then help him plan *how* he's going to do it. Will he need to make a trip to the library? Does he need any special supplies?

If your child is overwhelmed by a huge project, breaking it up into smaller, more manageable parts can help.

### Step 2: Do.

The athletic shoe commercials have it right. It is important to just do it. All the planning in the world doesn't take the place of sitting down and attacking a job. So, after planning, the next step is doing. If your child is working on a large project—for example, a history report—he should make some progress toward his goal every day.



### Step 3: Finish.

Dishes aren't finished until they're put away. A report isn't finished until it's double-checked. Make sure your child knows that it's often those last few minutes of effort that make the difference between a passing grade and a failing one.

## Effort, Not Just Ability, Is the Key to Success

**T**oo many students believe that only "smart" kids can do well in school. But, in fact, all students can succeed—if they are willing to put in the effort.

When students don't understand something right away, but keep at it, they can often outscore others on tests in math and reading—regardless of their IQs.

As one mother explained to her child: "Smart is not something you just *are*. Smart is something you can *get*."

## Studying a Musical Instrument May Help

**S**tudying an instrument can be one of the best ways for your child to see the value of hard work.

At first, your child may know nothing about playing an instrument. He may not be able to read notes. He may make only a few sounds. But, by sticking with it and practicing regularly, he will soon be making music.

This is a lesson your child can transfer to other subjects. If he works hard and studies every day, he can master even the toughest material.



## Make the Connection Between Sports and School

**O**n the athletic field, kids usually understand the importance of hard work. They know that practice will help them improve their jump shots or their batting averages. They also know that even the most gifted athlete can't be a winner if she doesn't practice every day. But kids don't always make the connection between the practice field and the classroom. That's where parents come in.

Make sure your child has a regular time for homework. You may need to use a calendar to schedule homework time every day. (If she has basketball practice at 5 p.m., she may need to start homework immediately after school.)

If your child is frustrated because she's having trouble catching on to a new subject, encourage her to keep at it. Say, "I'm sure you can learn anything if you just keep working."



## Ability Alone Just Isn't Enough

**E**very day, teachers see talented students who do poorly in school because they just don't try. Some intelligent people are failures despite their high IQs.

It is hard to find examples of people who apply themselves, work hard—and still fail. Simple hard work will beat simple ability every time.

Every child has some abilities, strengths or special talents. You can teach your child that the real secret to success is developing abilities through hard work.



**"Don't be afraid of hard work or of teaching your children to work. Work is dignity and caring and the foundation for a life with meaning."**

*—Marian Wright Edelman*

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