

## Helping Your Child Stay Cool for Schoolwork

### Schedules

Using a schedule helps your child understand what to do and become more independent in getting things done. When something is drawn or written down, your child doesn't have to remember it. Depending on how much information your child can handle at once, here are some ideas for a schedule:

First	Then
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Math
Break
English
Play outside

Done

before 8:30  
**Wake Up**

9:00 to 9:30  
**Body Break Choice**

9:30 to 10:15  
**Learning**

10:15 to 10:45  
**Snack**

10:45 to 11:30  
**Learning**

11:30 to 12:00  
**House help Choice**

12:00 to 1:00  
**Lunch**

### Timers

Children who have trouble working on things they don't like, such as schoolwork, need a lot of help to get started. When they know how long something will last, it gives them a sense of control to know they won't have to work on it "forever." Timers let children know when it's time to move on from one activity to the next. It's best to use a timer that not only shows the time counting down, but also the amount of time that's passed since the timer started. There are many free and paid for apps such as children's countdown timer or you could buy a time timer online.

### Breaks

Everyone needs regular breaks from their work, including children! Some children need breaks every two minutes, and others can focus for 20 or 30 minutes before needing a break. The length of time that your child can focus may depend on what they're doing. Before your child starts working, decide what their break choices will be. Choose activities that your child finds calming, enjoys for 5 or 10 minutes, and doesn't mind stopping. Many

children do best when breaks are in their schedule and a timer is set at the start of the break. Here are some ideas:

- grabbing a glass of water and/or a healthy snack
- drawing, colouring, mazes, or dot-to-dot activities
- looking at a book or staring out the window
- working on a puzzle
- playing with a building toy such as Lego
- taking some belly breaths (counting to five while you do them with your child)
- listening to music
- stretching, dancing, jumping, hopping, marching, running on the spot, or...
- doing housework like sweeping,

Avoid giving your child breaks on technology or with a toy or game that they'll have trouble quitting when their break is over. Every day, your child should get at least 20-30 minutes of exercise that makes them sweat and breathe hard.

### Sensory tools

Our energy levels are affected by what we see, hear, feel, smell, and taste. They're also affected by how we move our bodies. Sensory tools and activities can help children avoid being too active or getting too sleepy during work times. Here are some tools that help most children stay 'just right' for learning:

- Drink something that's cool (e.g. water with ice cubes) or warm (e.g. herbal tea).
- Eat a crunchy or chewy snack (e.g. veggie sticks, apple slices, dried fruit or meat).
- Chew gum.
- Smell essential oils by using a diffuser or putting a few drops onto a cotton ball.
- Squeeze a fidget such as a stress ball or do something with their hands (e.g. push them together, pull them apart, make circles with fingers and thumbs).
- Put on some music or use noise-cancelling headphones to make it quieter.
- Adjust the lighting to make it brighter or darker. Use natural lighting when possible.
- Put something heavy on their lap or wrap them up in a blanket.

### Other tips and tricks

Chunking means dividing an assignment, project, or job into smaller parts. This helps a child feel less overwhelmed by their schoolwork. Estimate how long your child will be able to focus on something and assign them only that much work. They will have less anxiety and feel proud when they finish.

Motivators help children who have a hard time starting and finishing their work. Have something fun or delicious on the schedule after they finish their work. First work, then something good is always a good motto to help motivate!

Make a nice set up that works for your child. Clear the area of clutter so there are fewer distractions and have necessary supplies at the ready for worktime. Having your child work at the same spot daily helps alleviate unknowns and creates routine and safety.

Allow for extra breaks and breathing when you see your child getting frustrated, distracted, or disinterested.

Use encouraging language to praise their effort and hard work. Studies show that praising children's effort and mistakes (because they tried) makes their brains grow. Children who are raised with this kind of praise are more resilient and become better learners.

Plan to do something fun with your child after they finish their work. After your child has followed your lead as their teacher, join your child in doing something they want to do.