

HOMEWORK & STUDYING

See It, Learn It: Make Homework Come Alive for Visual Learners

Visual learners need to physically doodle, create mind maps, take notes, and generally translate learning through their own creative lens. Here, learn strategies for visual reinforcement that will help your child solidify what she's learned in the classroom — and retain it.

BY BETTE FETTER

The hours after school are a reprieve for kids with attention deficit disorder ([ADHD or ADD](#)). After spending the day feeling stifled, misunderstood, and frustrated in the classroom, “after school” offers a chance to relax and just be themselves. But a significant portion of the learning that went into your child’s brain during the day can be lost if it isn’t reinforced at home in a visual format that kids with ADHD can easily grasp.

In general, children with ADHD are [right-brained learners](#). They prefer to learn visually — by watching or doing a task in an activity-based, hands-on format, not by listening to lectures, practicing drills, or memorizing.

There are many ways to implement [visual learning](#) outside the classroom. Here are my best tips for doing it at home.

Make Studying Easier by Making It a Visual Endeavor

Visual learners need mental pictures of the material they are learning. When they recall information while studying or taking a test, they are actually remembering the stored picture of the information. Try some of these visual strategies at home

1. Have your child doodle and draw what she is learning. If she is learning about the life cycle of plants, she can sketch out each step of the process. The images she creates will help her remember the material later.

[Self-Test: [Could Your Child Have an Executive Function Deficit?](#)]

2. Take notes. The physical act of [note-taking](#) keeps the hands and mind involved in the learning process. It also creates mental pictures to remember.

3. Add color to enhance key points. For lessons that include new vocabulary or important themes, have your child write the words or phrases in a different color each time it appears in her notes. Using color makes homework more fun and helps her recall information.

4. Show older kids how to organize complex information by creating a visual diagram, or a [mind map](#), of what they’re learning or reading. Start by writing a word or drawing an image to represent the main topic or central idea, such as “Space.” Then add branches to the map, with each branch labeled with a related keyword or image, such as “Milky Way,” “Planets,” and “Meteors.” Add new branches under the branches you just labeled with sub-keywords of those topics.

Helping Visual Learners Understand Homework Assignments

To support a visual learning style, you need to help kids develop organization skills. Right-brained, visual-spatial kids usually have a whirlwind of thoughts running through their minds. This makes them [creative](#), but it also causes them to be less focused and organized. Be patient, knowing that this is out of their control.

[Free Resource: [Tricks to Boost Your Child’s Writing Skills](#)]

Here are some organizational strategies to help your child make sense of it all at homework time:

1. **Help your child organize his assignments and plan the order of “attack.”** Put each homework assignment on a different sticky note, and line up the notes in order of importance, throwing away each note as each task is accomplished to underscore his priorities and progress.
2. **Be sure your child understands what is expected of him** and explain if necessary.
3. **Put directions into simple bullet points** wherever possible.
4. **Make to-do lists.** Keep them short and simple. [Mark things off](#) as they are completed.
5. **Check on your child’s progress as he works through complex assignments.** Divide the steps of a larger assignment into smaller steps, and list them on his to-do list or sticky notes.

Tackling Written Work From a Visual Perspective

Classrooms and reading assignments are language heavy and may slow down the learning process, or stop it altogether. When a kid settles in to do writing homework, she may be overwhelmed or confused, but there are ways you can help.

1. **Talk through the writing assignment with your child** to get the ideas flowing.
2. **Have her draw a picture of what she’s thinking before writing.** If she’s writing an essay reflecting on a book or movie, have her first [draw a picture of the main idea](#) of the book or movie to help her generate an idea for the next step of writing.
3. **Have him write individual words, phrases, or ideas on sticky notes or notecards as he thinks of them.** Don’t worry about order. [Just let the ideas flow.](#)
4. **For longer assignments or essays, you can help by jotting down words or phrases as your child talks** to help her remember what she wants to share.
5. **Work with your child to put her thoughts and sticky notes in order, [creating a visual outline](#)** to follow as she writes up the assignment.

Right-brain kids, especially those with ADHD, learn best with tools that play to their natural strengths. By ensuring that your child is reinforcing learning at home through visual strategies, you’re helping shape, feed, and enrich the way the visual-spatial side of her mind functions. And for kids with ADHD, this can give them the boost they need to succeed at home and in the classroom.

[Toy Stories: Play Therapy for Children with ADHD]

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