



**Enhanced Learning**  
**Educational Services**  
*“the study skills specialist”*

## **MY CHILD DOESN'T THINK STUDY SKILLS MATTER, HOW CAN I HELP THEM SEE THE VALUE?**

*“My child doesn't want to engage with study skills because they don't think they are important.”*

Sometimes students say things like:

- “I'm doing fine.”
- “I don't need to change.”
- “Study skills are boring.”
- “This won't help.”
- “I already know what to do.”
- “I shouldn't have to study this much.”
- “School doesn't matter that much anyway.”

This can be difficult for parents, especially when you can see that your child's current approach is causing stress, rushed assignments, poor preparation, avoidable mistakes, or results that do not reflect their ability.

The challenge is that you usually cannot force a student to value study skills just by telling them they are important. Most students need to see how the strategies connect to something that matters to them.

### **Start with their experience, not your argument**

If the conversation begins with:

*“You need to take school more seriously,”*

many students will immediately defend themselves.

A more useful starting point is curiosity:

- “What feels hardest about school at the moment?”
- “What part of homework or study annoys you the most?”
- “Do you feel like the effort you put in matches the results you get?”
- “Are there times when school feels more stressful than it needs to be?”
- “What would you like to be easier?”

This shifts the conversation from blame to problem-solving.

## Link study skills to making life easier

Many students do not care about “study skills” as a concept. But they may care about:

- having more free time
- feeling less stressed
- avoiding last-minute panic
- getting parents off their back
- feeling more confident before tests
- not forgetting homework
- doing better with less wasted effort
- having more control over their week

So instead of saying:

*“You need better study skills.”*

Try:

- “Would you like homework to take less time?”
- “Would you like to feel less stressed before tests?”
- “Would you like to stop having assignments ruin your weekend?”
- “Would you like to know what to do when you sit down, instead of wasting time getting started?”

Study skills are not just about marks. They are about making school more manageable.

## Help them see the cost of not changing

Some students do not see the need to change because the consequences have not yet become obvious to them.

Rather than lecturing, help them reflect.

You could ask:

- “What happened last time you left the assignment until the last few days?”
- “How did you feel the night before the test?”
- “Did rereading your notes actually help you remember the information?”
- “What mistakes did you make that you could have avoided?”
- “Is your current system working as well as you want it to?”

The aim is not to shame them. The aim is to help them notice patterns.

## Use evidence from their own life

Students are more likely to listen when the example comes from their own experience.

For example:

- “You said you felt rushed with the last assignment. Maybe planning earlier would reduce that.”
- “You studied for that test, but you mostly read your notes. Maybe practice questions would show you what you actually know.”
- “You forgot the homework twice this week. Maybe one place to record tasks would help.”
- “You spent a long time at your desk, but you said you didn’t get much done. Maybe distractions are part of the issue.”

Keep the tone practical, not critical.

## Do not ask for a personality change

Some students resist because they think adults are asking them to become a completely different person: highly organised, constantly motivated, perfectly focused and always disciplined.

That feels unrealistic.

Instead, make it clear that study skills are not about becoming someone else. They are about having a few systems that make school easier.

You might say:

- “You don’t have to become a super-organised person. You just need one system that helps you remember what is due.”
- “You don’t have to love studying. You just need a way to get started.”
- “You don’t have to study for hours. You need to make the time you do spend more effective.”
- “You don’t have to change everything. Let’s improve one thing.”

This makes change feel more achievable.

## Focus on experiments, not lectures

Resistant students are often more open to a short experiment than a permanent commitment.

Try:

- “Test this for one week.”
- “Try doing practice questions before the next quiz and see if it helps.”
- “Use a planner for five school days and then decide whether it made a difference.”
- “Put your phone away for the first 20 minutes of homework and see whether you finish faster.”
- “Make flashcards for one topic and test whether you remember more.”

An experiment feels less like surrendering to parental pressure.

## Give controlled choices

Students need some ownership. If they feel study skills are being imposed on them, they may resist just to regain control. Offer choices such as:

- “Would you rather work on distractions, assignments or test preparation first?”
- “Would you prefer a paper planner, phone reminders or a whiteboard?”
- “Would you rather study in shorter blocks or get one longer block done?”
- “Would you rather make flashcards, mind maps or summary sheets?”
- “Would you prefer I help you plan the week, or would you rather do it yourself and show me the plan?”

You are still setting expectations, but you are allowing some autonomy.

## Connect effort to future freedom

For some students, the most motivating message is not “work harder now for a distant future.” That can feel too abstract.

A more immediate message is:

- “The more you build these skills, the more independence you earn.”
- “If you can show you have a system, I will not need to remind you as much.”
- “If you plan ahead, your weekends are less likely to be taken over by schoolwork.”
- “If you learn how to study effectively, you may not need to spend as long studying.”

This frames study skills as a path to more freedom, not more control.

## **Be careful with fear-based motivation**

Warnings such as:

- “You’ll fail if you keep this up.”
- “You’ll ruin your future.”
- “You’ll never get into the course you want.”
- “You are wasting your potential.”

may sometimes get a short-term reaction, but they often create defensiveness, anxiety or avoidance.

A better message is:

- “I don’t expect perfection, but I do expect you to keep learning how to manage your responsibilities.”
- “Your habits matter because they affect how much control you feel.”
- “You are capable of improving this.”
- “The goal is not to be perfect. The goal is to keep getting better.”

## **Know when something else may be going on**

Sometimes a student says they “don’t care” when the real issue is that they feel overwhelmed, anxious, discouraged or convinced they cannot succeed.

Lack of engagement may be linked to:

- anxiety
- low mood
- ADHD
- learning difficulties
- perfectionism
- poor sleep
- friendship issues
- fear of failure
- feeling far behind
- not knowing where to start

If your child’s resistance is intense, persistent or accompanied by distress, withdrawal, school refusal or major mood changes, it may be worth speaking with the school, a counsellor, psychologist, GP or learning support staff.

## **Aim for one useful change**

The goal is not to convince your child overnight that study skills are important.

The goal is to help them experience one useful improvement.

That might be:

- starting homework with less conflict
- preparing for a test earlier
- using active study instead of just reading
- writing tasks in one place
- planning an assignment before starting
- reducing phone distractions for part of homework
- asking for help earlier
- reviewing mistakes after a test

Once students experience that a strategy actually helps, they are more likely to try another one.

## **Final thought**

If your child does not think study skills matter, avoid turning it into a battle about attitude.

Instead, help them connect study skills to things they may already want: less stress, more free time, fewer arguments, better results, more confidence and greater independence.

Start with their experience. Ask questions. Use examples from their own school life. Offer choices. Try one short experiment.

Students rarely change because they are lectured into caring.

They are more likely to change when they experience that a small strategy makes their life easier.