



10 TIPS

to a successful school year

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One size does not fit all.

Fall ushers in the excitement of a new school year, full of possibility. While you're helping your child get ready for a new classroom and a new teacher, you may be wondering what else you can do to prepare him for a successful school year.

There are several different learning styles, and each has a direct impact on how your child learns and processes information — thus their level of success — in the classroom. If your child's a left-brain thinker, they learn sequentially, memorize and test well — skills that align with traditional teaching methods.

If your child's a right-brain, visual thinker, they're creative, spatial, non-linear and intuitive. In our test-heavy education system, however, these children may struggle. Visual thinkers live in the world of images and need to see what they are learning. No seeing, no thinking; no thinking, no learning. They need help making learning and study visual.

Ten Ways to Help Your Child Succeed at School will help bridge the gap between what success in school requires and the way your child learns. Applying these ten tips will make a noticeable difference in your child's academic accomplishments.

01

Make things visual.

One of the most important things to understand about your visual child is that they respond better to images than words. Reading or listening to new information is just not enough for them. They need to see, to be actively involved in what they are learning. So whether it's in the classroom or at home, use reinforcements wherever you can. Encourage your child to write, doodle and draw to make their learning visual.



Things you can do...

- Make it visual. Writing, drawing, using pictures and adding color attracts visual kids. It's what they respond to. It's what makes learning fun.
- Give them plenty of markers, pens, notebooks and special pencils so they can make their world more visual.
- As a family, use calendars, white boards and colorful markers to communicate and remind.
- Make simple lists to organize information and keep homework on task.
- Help kids stay organized by labeling dressers, toys even their homework area with pictures and images.
- Understand the power of color. Use it in note taking and study. Color code where you can to help your child create order — visually.
- Most importantly, honor who your child is and how they learn.

02

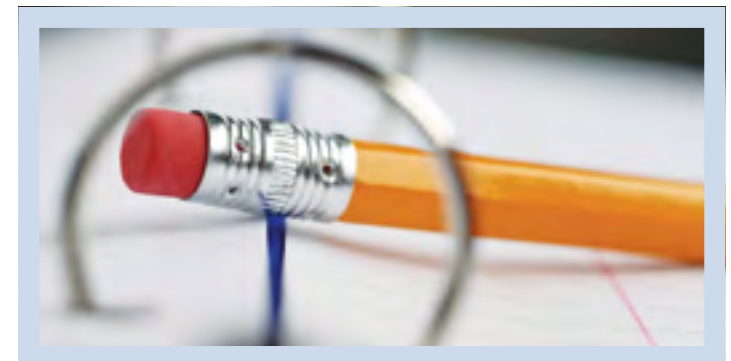
Use less language.

Because right-brain kids are visual, holistic thinkers, they are far less comfortable in the world of language. Our classrooms and reading assignments tend to be very language heavy and may overwhelm visual students, slow down the learning process or stop it all together. Once these kids settle in to do homework, they can feel overwhelmed or confused, but there are ways you can help.



Make homework more successful...

- Help your child organize their assignments and plan the order of “attack”.
- Read through homework assignments with your child.
- Be sure they understand what is expected and translate where necessary.
- Rewrite directions into simple bullet points when possible.
- Make lists. Keep them short and simple. Mark things off when complete.
- Check in on them as they work through complex assignments.





03

Develop organization skills.

Right brain, visual-spatial kids usually have a whirlwind of thoughts running through their minds. This is what makes them so creative, but also what causes them to be less focused and organized. Be patient, knowing that this is out of their control. There's a lot of great stuff going on, but they're going to need some help calming their minds and ordering their own thoughts.

Help your child be more organized...

- Be a good example by practicing what you preach. Your level of organization affects your child's success.
- Designate special areas for homework, backpacks and school supplies.
- Post a wall calendar for the family to use. Keep colored markers nearby to mark events.
- Use a white board for daily reminders. Keep it simple and colorful.
- Help your child write homework lists using a simple calendar, and keep their work area organized.
- Check in on them regularly, correcting and redirecting as needed. Remember to keep it positive. They're still learning.

04

Make study visual.

Drill and rote memorization are not effective forms of learning or study for visual kids. Their minds just don't process information that way. Visual people need to create mental pictures of the material they are learning. When they recall information, for study or testing, they actually remember the stored picture of the information. Because they're remembering the picture, their learning needs to include making and using mental pictures.

Ways to learn visually...

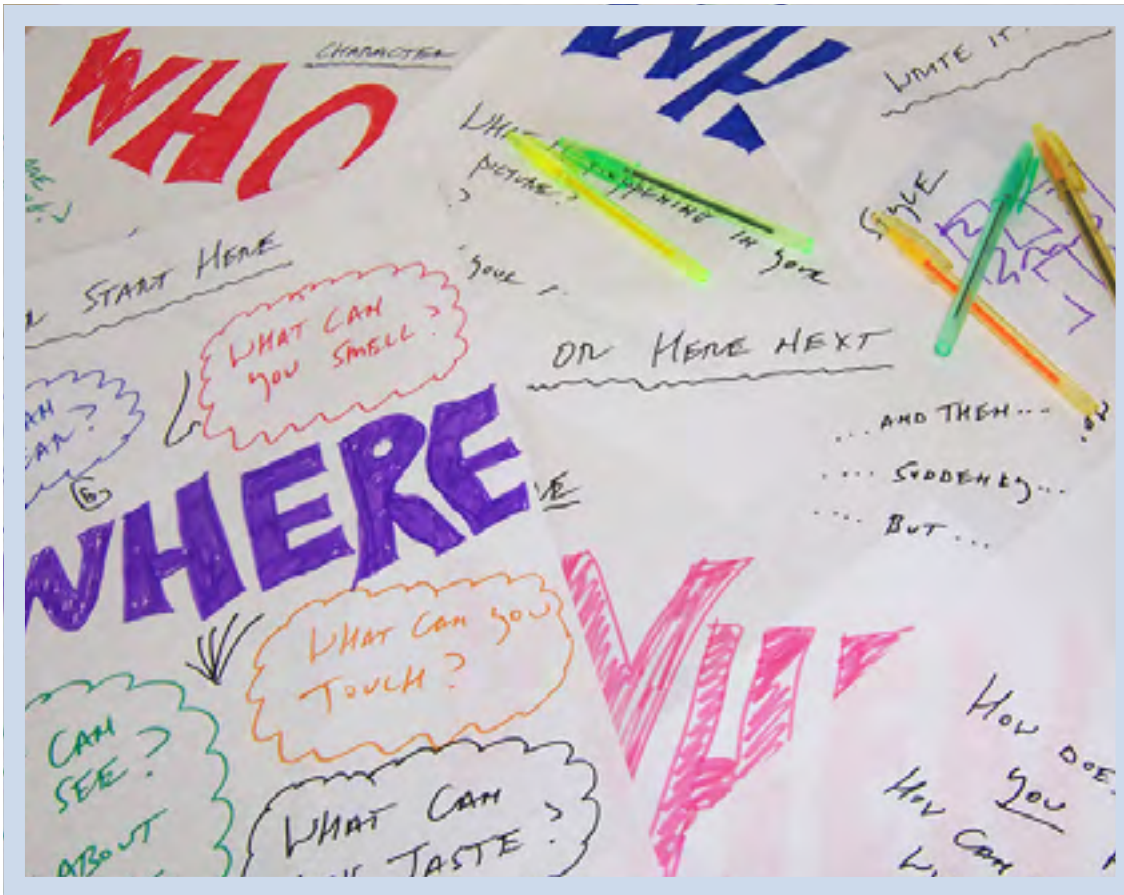
- Doodle and draw what you're learning. The images you make will help you learn and will be what you remember later.
- Take notes. The physical act of note taking keeps the hands and mind involved in the learning process. It also creates mental pictures to remember.
- Add color to enhance key points. Using color makes it more fun and helps to recall information.
- Older students can organize complex information and make it visual by creating a visual diagram - mind mapping – what they're learning or reading.



05

Tell them why.

Visual kids need to know context before detail. They need to understand why something matters and how it relates to other concepts before they get into particulars. Once they understand, they start to create mental pictures and connect the details within the larger context. Without understanding the why, their brain can't put the pieces together. The information — the learning — is fragmented, disconnected and inefficient.



Help your child absorb new information...

- Be sure your child understands what they're learning. Ask a few questions to gauge their level of understanding.
- Find supporting materials — picture books, short videos, books on related subject — that explain the subject from another angle.
- Help them connect the dots. Explain the big picture. Tell them why the lesson matters and how it fits with things they already know and understand.
- Talk things through. Let them ask questions. Respect what they need to know in order to move forward.

06

Make math visual.

Success in math is based on computation skills, repetition and timed tests. These can be negatives for right-brain, visual thinkers, because they think conceptually and are less detail oriented. But our visual kids are going to have to do math, take tests and know how to compute. To help them be more successful, make math visual and tactile and be sure they understand the concept behind the computation.



Doing math at home...

- Be sure they understand why they are doing what the assignment says to do. Ask them simple questions. Provide simple answers.
- Demonstrate math concepts with real things. Count jellybeans. Add & subtract with apples or crackers. Use square tiles to “see” square numbers.
- Give them their own cup of beads, chips or tile squares to keep on hand when thinking through new math concepts or practicing old ones.
- The kitchen is a great place for math. Count, subtract and measure ingredients. Use food portions, like pizza slices, to “see” fractions.
- Making math real is for all ages. You may even want to retread some things you may have forgotten over the years.



07

Make writing visual.

Writing about “What I did on my summer vacation” can be pretty intimidating for a child whose mind starts swirling at the very mention of such a volume of experience. Words can trigger a thousand memories, challenging a visual child to hone in on one selection. Knowing how to turn those rich three-dimensional pictures and images into words and sentences doesn’t come naturally.

Help your child get ready for writing assignments...

- Talk through the writing assignment. This gets the ideas flowing.
- Have them jot down words or phrases to remember what they want to share.
- Use sticky notes, notecards or small pieces of paper to write on.
- Have them write individual words, phrases or ideas as they think of them. Don’t worry about order. Just let the ideas flow.
- Help your child put the small papers and thoughts in order, creating a visual outline.
- Now they can write their essay or paper, using the visual outline they made.

08

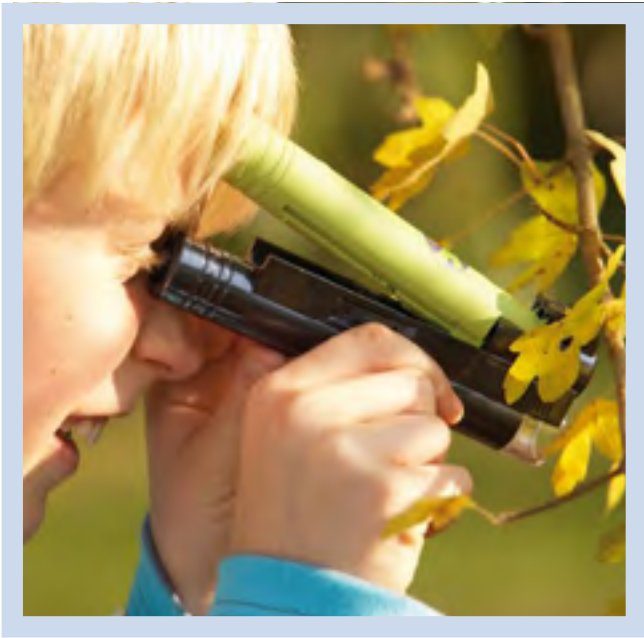
Provide multi-sensory learning opportunities.

Not all learning comes from reading books, writing papers and practicing vocabulary words. We are multisensory beings, and learning happens best when it involves all our senses. Whether at home or at school, include lots of hands-on activities. Touch it. Make it. Bake it. Take it apart. Put it back together again. Provide real life tools and experiences that support what's happening at school.



Enhance your child's classroom learning...

- Head into the kitchen. Make food from a country they are studying at school.
- Do art and science projects that relate to what's happening in the classroom.
- Make regular trips to the local children's museum, natural history and art museum.
- Watch informational videos, age appropriate, of course, so kids can "see" what they've been learning in school.
- Watch movies together. Talk about the characters, motivation, setting and plot. Relate it to characters, time periods or books being read at school.
- Spend time doing, talking, looking and exploring — together.



09

Provide lots of hands-on creative opportunities.

The right side of our mind speaks a unique language and needs to be nourished and fed in its native tongue. That language is creativity. It's art. Children need lots of opportunity to explore, think, discover and create. Open-ended creative play provides unique ways of looking at things, the ability to see multiple solutions to problems, new ideas and the joy of discovery that the right side of every mind needs.



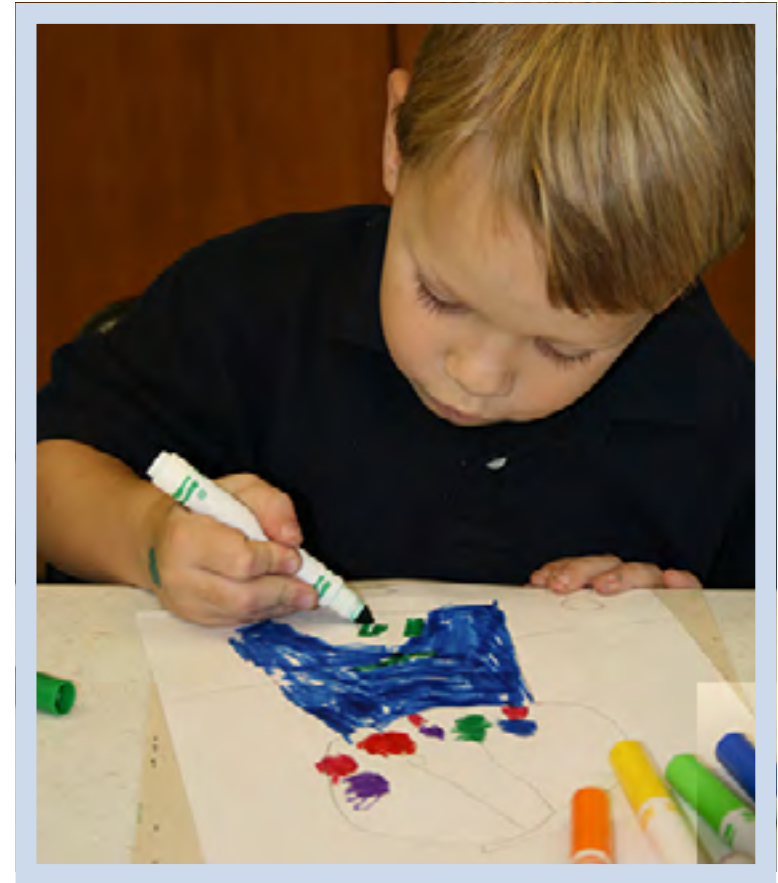
Keep ideas flowing and creative play happening...

- Provide costumes, props and dress up clothes, for boys and girls.
- Have containers of art and craft supplies on hand. Be sure they are well organized and age appropriate.
- Legos, blocks & construction sets are great for developing your spatially-gifted child.
- Invite scientific investigation with age appropriate science gear, like a mini microscope, magnifying glass and magnets.
- Have plenty of puzzles, board games, playing cards on hand and play together on regular family game nights.

10

Participate in the arts.

Right-brain visual kids need art. It's just that simple. The right side of all of our brains need what the arts have to offer. Participation in the arts shape, feed, nourish and enrich the way the visual-spatial side of our mind functions. It's where we learn to collaborate and see relationships and patterns. It's home to big-picture, conceptual thinking. It's where we think about not just what we can do, but what we should do, as individuals and as a society. Without the arts, this part of us dries up. It doesn't work. We don't learn. We don't think. We don't communicate or share ourselves. We don't innovate, create or imagine. The arts are a must have, essential to our lives and experience as human beings.



Be sure your child benefits from what the arts have to offer...

- Enroll your kids in art, dance and music classes.
- Let them be part of larger group by joining the band, choir or an art club.
- Go see art. Get to the art museum and art fairs.
- Go to the theater. Get involved in theater productions.
- Make art. Dance. Play music. Act out your own plays. Do it together.

Thank you.

Thank you for reading and considering the thoughts presented in *10 Ways to Succeed in School*. And thank you for being a parent, committed to better understanding who your child is and how they learn. Applying these strategies will make learning visual; allow your child to excel and feel confident about whom they are— all while increasing their level of success in the classroom.



For more information about what it means to be a visual learner, ways you can help your child and the importance of participating in the arts; read my book *Being Visual*. Available on all your favorite devices as well as hardcopy.

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