

10 ways to keep your child motivated to learn

Your child's school is now closed and all learning is online. Suddenly you have been thrust into the role of teacher helping your child engage in virtual learning. You have no experience of it and it can be frustrating. It's a big change for them and a big one for you. It may start as fun and a something of a novelty but that is unlikely to last. You are in it for the long haul.

Play up the importance of effort.

We feel greater satisfaction when we've achieved something than difficult than when we've done something easy. Remind your child how good it feels to strive and achieve, and celebrate their success when they've put in effort.

Feed their curiosity.

If your child has a passion for something – whether that's maths, music or My Little Pony – they'll naturally be motivated to do it, and that can help instil good habits. Be child-led and let them explore their curiosity, even if it seems a bit odd to you.

Be curious yourself.

If we want our children to be motivated to achieve, we need to demonstrate that behaviour ourselves. For example, if you want your child to learn piano, don't just send them to lessons: be involved with their practice, and let them see you playing the piano yourself.

Build their self-esteem.

Rather than saying, "Don't worry, I know you're not very good at spelling," which compounds a lack of self-belief, build your child's self-esteem by saying, "I understand you're finding this difficult, but if we keep working at it, we'll get there."

Focus on the future.

If your child is older, especially if they've started secondary school, you can challenge their lack of motivation by highlighting the importance of working hard. They need reminding that the work they're doing now is preparing them for future success, and that it's worth putting in the effort now.

Know when to step back.

It's natural to feel frustrated if your child isn't trying their hardest, but try not to slip into nagging and remonstrating. Sometimes children and teenagers feel highly charged and emotional at these times, they're not in the mood for a rational conversation, so save it until they're in a better frame of mind.

Support, but don't take over.

Metaphorically holding your child's hand through every piece of work might make them get it done, but it won't increase their self-motivation, so aim to guide and support without taking over. Success comes as a result of practice, and children are most likely to succeed if they choose to practise for themselves.

Celebrate effort rather than achievement.

If your child struggles to motivate themselves, it can be tempting to offer incentives: for example, linking pocket money to good marks. The problem with bribery is that it creates a mentality where children are just looking for what they have to do to "win the game".

Ask the right questions.

You can engender a love of learning in your child by showing genuine interest in what they're doing in their learning. Make time to talk, and instead of asking what your child did, ask them what they learnt and what was interesting. This starts a dialogue, rather than simply getting your child to list what they've done.

Don't crowd out fun.

Yes, schoolwork matters, but it's vital to balance it with time for your child to do what they enjoy. We have to exercise common sense: having fun doesn't mean your child won't have future success, so make sure they still get to go out with their friends and take part in things they enjoy.