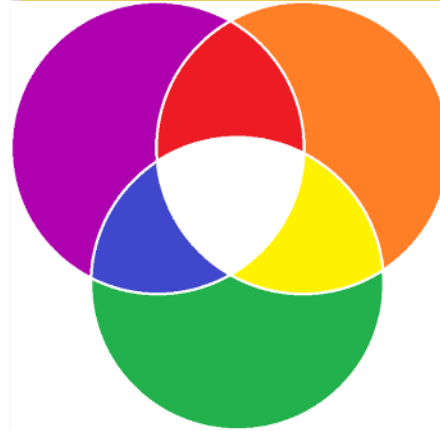


Learning Nuggets

5 TIPS TO BOOST YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING ABILITY



Unlock these 5
Powerful "Turbo
Learner" Tips for
your child to
retain more, learn
more and love
learning again!

"An investment in
knowledge pays the best
dividends"
- Benjamin Franklin

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My Story



Who am I and why should you listen to me?

My name is Prakash Rao. I come from a family where education was and is paramount. I have a Bachelor's degree (B.E. Honors) in Computer Science from the prestigious REC of Trichy (now NIT Trichy), a Master's in Computer Engineering from Boston University and an MBA in Finance from New York University.

But it was not an easy trip.

So long as I was in elementary school, I did very well at studies and was every teacher's pet. I now realize that this was because my mother, a teacher, sat with me as I studied and helped me learn. When I reached middle school, my mother became busy with her own Ph.D. program and the demands of the school that she was the principal of. My grades were abysmal. Since my mother could not spend more of her time and effort with me, she did the next best thing – she taught me to learn.

In two years, I was at the top of the grade again. Since then, I have learnt easily and retained what I grasped for a long time. I have done so by using my entire brain (right-brain, left-brain, cerebellum), my entire mind (conscious, subconscious and unconscious) and all my senses.

I did not realize the value of what I had until I started teaching my children how to learn. And other children. It is now my passion to help children learn easily, achieve better grades and get into the high school/college/job of their dreams.

How You Can Help Your Child

It is good for parents to be personally involved in their children's education. However, while you know your child well, unless you know what you are doing and the outcomes of your actions, your involvement may not yield the results you desire.

What should you do?



Understand that educating your child is as complex as constructing the Hoover Dam. It takes a goal, a plan, actions, encouragement and evaluation. The goal must be realistic, not just a pipe dream. The plan must consider not only the most direct approach but also ways to overcome obstacles. The actions must be achievable without torturing the child – it

should have an element of fun (“Just a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down in a most delightful way”). The encouragement must be genuine, not mere formulaic platitudes that have no meaning and do not appeal to the heart. The evaluation must be fair, not mere criticisms – there must be more positive remarks than negative.

It is especially true now, during the COVID pandemic, when children have remote schooling and parents juggle working from home with helping their children. The situation is fraught with anxiety, stress and tension, and every molehill could escalate into a mountain. How do you help your child while balancing your professional and personal lives? How do you soothe your child's emotions while appealing to his/her mind to learn better?

Let's get started. Here are 6 powerful tips you can take to launch your child's education into greater heights (I know that the title says 5. I like to under promise and over deliver!):

Tip 1: Step Forward from Where Your Child Is

As adults, we already know many of the things that the child is trying to learn. We tend to forget that we were children once. I remember teaching my young son that two and two made four. What is obvious to you is a mental stretch to your child.

Understand what your child knows already and what he/she needs to learn. That is the starting point. When you realize what your child does not know and what you know already, it will enable you to see the world from your child's point of view. That will help you be more sympathetic and patient, and that is precisely what your child needs from you right now.

I have seen parents work with their children getting on and off escalators in shopping malls. They step just before the escalator, count down, step on with the child and steady the child in the initial lurch that the child feels when the escalator moves forward. This is the same thing that you should do with your child – figuratively, of course – when working with him/her on new lessons.

Also, make sure that you are taking the right steps. Education has changed since you went to school. How I used to solve math problems is different from how my sons have been taught at school. When I tried to show them my solution, they got confused. It got to a point when the teacher asked me to either follow what is done at school or not help my children. I had to relearn basic middle-school mathematics!

There is a Chinese proverb that states “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” but that is only partially true. The journey begins with understanding where you are and where you need to go. Otherwise, the journey will be like what the Cheshire Cat discussed with Alice (in Lewis Carroll's *Alice In Wonderland*):



“Alice: Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

The Cheshire Cat: That depends a good deal on where you want to get to.

Alice: I don't much care where.

The Cheshire Cat: Then it doesn't much matter which way you go.

Alice: ...So long as I get somewhere.

The Cheshire Cat: Oh, you're sure to do that, if only you walk long enough.”

Finally, on this subject, speed does not matter: Only progress matters. Be patient.

Tip 2: Practice Does Not Make Perfect!

There is an old proverb going around that Practice Makes Perfect. No, it does not! Practice makes *permanent*. If you practice – or repeat – the wrong thing, you will permanently remember the wrong thing.



Many years ago, my cousin who was studying anatomy to be a doctor often missed the “l” in the Latin name of the depression behind the knee (popliteal fossa). Now, years later, if I teasingly ask him what the depression behind the knee is called, he still calls it “popiteal fossa”! It is permanently wrong in his mind. Not

that it matters, now that he is an established doctor, and such errors are caught by auto-correct on most phones and computers. Nevertheless, it serves my point that when you practice something wrong, you get it wrong.

5 Tips to Boost Your Child's Learning Ability

Practice does not make perfect. Practice makes permanent. Perfect practice makes perfect.

The human mind is peculiar, to say the least. You can learn almost anything but you can never consciously unlearn anything. It reminds me of a scene in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's play *The Rivals*:

Mrs. MALAPROP But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow—to [obliterate] him, I say, quite from your memory.

LYDIA Ah, madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

Indeed, it is impossible to consciously forget. The only thing you can do is to practice (if it is a physical skill) or repeat (if it is a concept to be memorized) the correction to the mistakes so much that it replaces the original mistake that was made permanent.

Therefore, to prevent mistakes from becoming permanent, your child should verify and validate knowledge before learning more. Self-tests are very useful in this regard.

Finally, on this subject, how long does it take to make something permanent? Experiments, including at NASA, have shown that it takes the average person about 3 weeks to memorize something or to learn a new physical skill. The caveat is that the person should practice rigorously every day.

Tip 3: Avoid the Student's Syndrome



5 Tips to Boost Your Child's Learning Ability

There is a strange phenomenon that occurs when a student is assigned a report or project to be submitted in several days – from three days to a couple of weeks. If the student worked diligently on the task, biting off a little bit every day, the task could be completed on time easily and with sufficient quality.

Unfortunately, most students waste the first few days and scramble at the end to get enough done and sneak it in on or about time. The students pull all-nighters, keep them going on caffeine, get very stressed out and react very emotionally to the slightest disturbance. I have seen my share of these, but, thankfully, my sons neither pushed many projects to the last minute nor did they get too emotional. Also, my sons went through their “stressful” times without the additional Damocles’ sword of COVID dangling over them. In today’s atmosphere, where families are constantly thrown together and isolated from others, I expect the problem to be many times more dramatic.

Student’s Syndrome is related to but not the same as Parkinson’s Law: Work expands so as to fill the time available to complete it. In the Student’s Syndrome, work does not expand but time is not effectively used.

The problem of the Student’s Syndrome has other implications.

In Stephen Covey’s “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People”, he said that when people worked on tasks that are not urgent, they tended to be proactive, while when they worked on urgent tasks, they tended to be reactive. What’s the difference?

When you are proactive, you have the time to think things through. You can consider alternatives, pick the best, plan, carry out the plan, and verify. When you are reactive, you don’t have the luxury of time. You pick the first idea that seems to fit and slap things together. The Student’s Syndrome forces students to be reactive.

The solution to the “Student’s Syndrome” is to begin on the task as soon as it is assigned, and to completely think it through within the first day. If you act as your child’s sounding board as soon as any report or project is assigned, you can help with the planning and layout. When the planning is done, the task is simply a matter of filling out details. This can be whittled away, and the task can be completed well in time and with excellent quality. It makes all the difference between an A and a C on a project or report.

Does your child ever come to you and wallow in self-pity? Does your child complain that he/she does not get it, he/she must be stupid, and that he/she just gives up?

Tip 4: Stop Self-Pity

Would you let your child give up?



Let me ask you: Did your child start running as a toddler?

Your child did not start off running. Your child crawled, stood, walked with faltering steps, walked steadily, and only then began to run. Likewise, when learning new concepts, your child will take baby steps before striding forward

confidently.

You didn’t allow your child to wallow in self-pity when he/she fell down while learning to walk. You didn’t tell your child, “You’ll never learn to walk.” You didn’t allow your child to stop trying to walk after the initial failures. You helped your child learn to walk.

The difference is that a toddler has no sense of self-importance and does not equate a few failed attempts with inability to learn, and that the parents patiently work with their children to get them to walk. By the time children are in middle school, the ego is easily bruised, and parents don’t prevent them from giving up.

5 Tips to Boost Your Child's Learning Ability

It is easy to give up. Unfortunately, most children give up when they are just short of competence. As Napoleon Hill mentioned in *Think and Grow Rich*, many gold diggers give up when they are just 3 feet away from gold. The learning curve may look steep but there are many learning techniques that can help your child get at least enough competence to hold his/her own.

As hockey icon Wayne Gretzky said, "You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

And John Greenleaf Whittier wrote in his poem "Maud Muller",

"For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been!'"

Don't allow your child to give up and then lament on what may have been.

Tip 5: The Human Brain Gets Fatigued, Too

How long can you sustain a thought?



The human brain is very fickle. It jumps from thought to thought like a monkey swings from tree to tree. We have about 12,000 to 60,000 thoughts every day, according to the DENT Institute for Neurological Studies, which works out to a thought every 1-5 seconds that we are awake (assuming that we sleep for 8 hours a day). It takes a lot of effort to sustain a thought.

The brain accounts for only 2% of the human body weight but uses 20% of the blood and oxygen. It consumes a lot of the body's energy. Therefore, activities that force you to think are very tiring.

Children learn very well in short bursts. They do very poorly when they are forced to work on something for hours on end. One way to make use of this is to ask your child to study one topic for only 8 minutes at a time. After 4 8-minute sessions, your child can take a 6-minute break. This can be repeated as many times as needed to complete the tasks of the day.

Another way of avoiding brain fatigue is to separate the tasks into “thought” sections and “actions” sections, and not having any conscious thoughts during the actions section. This makes the action purely mechanical, subject to physical fatigue but not mental fatigue.

Bonus Tip: How to Get Your Child to Love Learning Again

Dale Carnegie said that the best way to get someone to do something is to make them want to do it.

You can coax and cajole your child to sit and study. You can bribe your child with gifts and privileges. You can threaten them with consequences if they did not study. You can actually punish them for not studying. In the first case, they will do it for you. In the second case, they will do it to get the reward. In the third and fourth cases, they will do it out of fear. However, none of these will achieve anything. The only way to make them achieve anything out of studying is when they want to study, and when they enjoy learning.

Tony Robbins, in his sales training, used the acronyms ERBN, LRBN and DRAB – Emotional Reasons to Buy Now, Logical Reasons to Buy Now, and Dominant Reasons to Avoid Buying. The premise is that while we human beings pride ourselves in the use of logic to make decisions, most of our decisions come from our emotions and we use logic to justify it. This is more so in children – they are not yet in the habit of making logical decisions – and more so with tweens and teens whose hormonal levels ensure that their lives are largely driven by emotions. Therefore, to make them learn because they want to (using Dale Carnegie’s principle), we give them emotional reasons and hold them in place with logical reasons (using Tony Robbins’ principle).

5 Tips to Boost Your Child's Learning Ability

Most middle school, high school and college students are passionate about something. As a parent, you either already know or can determine what your child feels strongly about. Help your child realize the passion while you demonstrate your own passion. Leverage the passion for one thing to other related areas. Show how all knowledge is linked. Through this journey, your child will become passionate about learning about everything.

Incidentally, the passion to learn will lead to feeling confident about himself/herself. This leads to a “Can do” attitude.

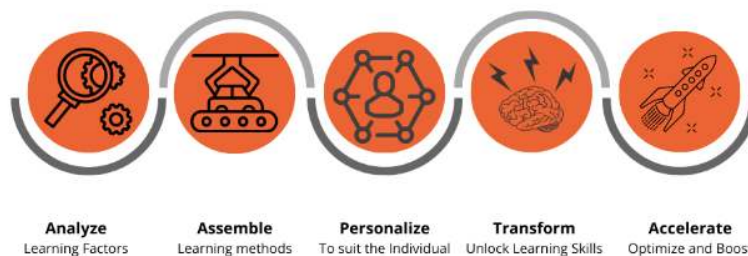
Next Steps

These tips are only the beginning. I am sure you could do with an education booster.

At Turbo Learner, I help children become better students by creating a personal learning process for each child.

Every child is a potential genius. Every child has the potential to learn anything easily, effectively and without stress. Unfortunately, this potential is hardly every realized because the ability is not identified or fostered. Every child is unique. Every child has a unique brain, thinks differently and learns differently.

I determine about 17 learning factors that underly each child’s learning abilities and use this to search through a database of leaning methods to identify what would work for this child. I put these learning methods together, fit it to the child and coach him/her in its use. (Some “children” balk at being called children. At my age, anyone in school or college is a child!)



5 Tips to Boost Your Child's Learning Ability

These are the steps I use to create a Personal Learning Process:

I *analyze* the child's learning factors (there are 17 factors)

I *assemble* a candidate learning process from a repertoire of learning strategies and techniques

I *personalize* the candidate learning process to suit the child

I coach the child in how to use his/her personal learning process and *transform* him/her

I optimize the learning process and add special techniques to *accelerate* the learning process

If you want to learn more about how I can customize a Turbo Learner Program for your child, book a complementary discovery session with me **Right [HERE](#)**.

5 Tips to Boost Your Child's Learning Ability

A child learns best when his/her **ability** to learn aligns with his/her **desire** to learn and **willingness** to learn. Would you like to make your child **ready, willing** and **able** to learn to his/her potential?