



## Practise improving your child's working memory- starting with one-step instruction

The educational psychologists and school teachers mention 'working memory' in meetings, you see it in your child's reports but what exactly is it? Working memory is similar to short term memory. It is the ability to take in information temporarily and process it in order to perform a task. Children are constantly being challenged to use their working memory throughout the school day.

Teachers give multi-step instructions to students explaining: maths steps on the board, how to complete a task independently, the morning or afternoon schedule, etc. Children who have poor working memory are often easily distracted, have difficulty following instructions, find it difficult to copy information from the board and can't seem to get started on their independent class work.



Photo by 6715269

The good news is that it is possible to improve working memory. In order to do so, we give our brain exercises, and then our working memory improves, allowing us to hold information longer. The more we focus and practise, the better our working memory will perform. This can take time, a lot of time, especially for those with a very poor working memory. Don't let this discourage you or your child. It's all about practise and patience.

Create small tasks for your child. Ask them to get 1 item (name the item) from their bedroom and bring it to you. Actually, it is a little more specific than this. Look at your child, say their name, and then say 'I want you to go to your bedroom and bring me your \_\_\_\_\_.' Then, ask your child to repeat the instruction to you, keeping eye contact. In the beginning, you may have to repeat the instruction a number of times until it can be repeated back to you correctly. Send them on their way. If they can complete this task successfully on a few consecutive occasions, increase the task to bringing you two items, three, etc. This activity can also be used in the grocery store, in the garden, visiting grandparents, etc. Creatively work this into your daily routine. But remember, the most important part of the task is to have the dialogue and eye contact. This cannot be carried out properly if your child is in another room or across the house and you are calling out the instruction, etc. Other ways of improving working memory are playing memory or cards.

By practising these activities everyday for as little as 5 minutes, you should start to see a big improvement in your child's working memory. And the best part of these activities is they can be done with the whole family, anytime. They can be done on the school run, a road trip, waiting for a brother or sister during an afterschool activity, or after dinner. It won't even seem like work! Go on, give it a try!