TURNING PAGES, BUILDING FUTURES

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

Making It Easier to Start

Small changes can help your child get into the work.

Short on time? There's a one-page Make It Easier planner on page 3 - jump straight there, and come back when you want the why.

Start Here

This resource is for the homework standoff, the untouched worksheet, the homeschool lesson that falls apart before it begins - and for every child who answers a request to sit down and learn by disappearing. It is not about making your child do the work. It is about making the work easier to start, so momentum can do the rest. And it works even if sitting down to learn has been a battle for a while. Maybe especially then.

The big idea: When your child leaves the activity, that's information.

A child who repeatedly walks away from learning isn't being lazy or defiant - they're telling you something. Before asking for more, it pays to look at three things: the task itself, the environment around it, and the way the learning is being presented. More often than not, the work isn't the problem. The start is.

Try This: Pick one difficult moment, make a small change

Start smaller than feels reasonable

Try: Two math problems instead of a row. One page of reading instead of the chapter. The goal at the start is not the work - the goal is the yes. Momentum can grow later; willingness has to start somewhere.

Make the first step a guaranteed yes

Try: Begin with something your child can already do, and let the harder stuff come second. A first step that ends in success changes how the next step feels - and how this afternoon feels to both of you.

Offer real choices

Try: Which subject first? Which pencil? Couch or table - or floor? Are you ready to start your reading? Offer two ways to begin: “Do you want to read the first page to me, or should I read it and you tell me what you notice?” Choices turn the work from something done to your child into something done by them, and a child who chooses has a reason to stay in the game.

Mix easy and challenging

Try: Sandwich the hard stuff between two easy pieces instead of stacking it all up front. “Two you know, one that's new, then two you know.” The hard part arrives when your child is already sitting there and already succeeding.

Change how they answer

Try: Pointing, matching, moving cards, building, saying it out loud - the learning can be exactly the same even when the response looks completely different. If writing is the hill the lesson dies on, take writing out of the first round.

Question the table

Try: Some goals don't need a desk. Math facts on a walk, spelling with sidewalk chalk, reading in a blanket fort. Learning doesn't have to look like school to count - and for some children, the kitchen table is the hardest place to start.

Stop while it's still going well

Try: End the session on a win, even if that means quitting earlier than planned. A short session that ends well makes tomorrow's start easier; pushing until frustration wins teaches your child that this work only ends in a bad feeling. You're not just getting through today's work - you're setting the tone your child brings to the next one.

These changes work together, but they don't all have to happen at once. Pick one task that's been a battle, and change one thing about how it starts.

What to look for

You don't need to collect formal data to notice whether something is helping. Over a week or two, watch for:

- ☐ Your child coming to the work with less protesting - or arriving at all
- ☐ Starting without you asking five times
- ☐ Staying a little longer before needing a break
- ☐ Getting through more of the task than before
- ☐ Tomorrow going a little more smoothly than today did

One small change is information - and a place to build from.

If it doesn't work...

If starting is still a standoff, that is not a verdict on your child - it is information. Try:

- Shrink the start again - one item, thirty seconds, then a real break. You can almost always go smaller.
- Make sure the first task really is a guaranteed yes - easy for your child today, not easy for their grade.
- Check the timing - a tired or hungry brain starts nothing. Try the same task after a snack.
- Add movement before seated work - five minutes of physical activity first makes sitting still easier.
- Show the finish line - “three problems, then done” beats an open-ended worksheet almost every time
- Look at the task itself - if it's far beyond your child right now, no amount of clever packaging fixes that.

Remember: You don't have to win the standoff. Make the work easier to start, and let momentum do the rest.

Want more practical ideas?

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Need help figuring out what to try?

If you've tried a few strategies, made adjustments, and still aren't sure what to change, PAGE can help you find practical ways to build communication, participation, learning, and independence into everyday life. **Learn more or schedule a consultation at pageaba.com.**

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The Make It Easier Planner

Pick the task that's been the hardest start this week. Write down what's hard about it, change one thing about how it begins, and notice what happens. Print this page or redraw it on any scrap of paper - it's a note to yourself, not a worksheet anyone will grade.

The task	What's the hard part?	One way to make it easier to start	What I noticed
Homework			
Handwriting			
Reading			
A homeschool lesson			
A group table activity			
Your own: _____			

This is a note to yourself, not a worksheet anyone will grade.

Pick one task. Change one thing. Notice what happens.