



**Children's  
Disability  
Network  
Team**

# **Children's Disability Network Team 6 Mid-Wicklow**



## **TRANSITION TO SECONDARY SCHOOL**

### **RESOURCE BOOKLET**

VERSION August 2024



**Children's  
Disability  
Network  
Team**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## 1. Getting Ready for the move: Practical Tips

- a. Communication skills
- b. 10 ways to help your child get organised
- c. Getting Organised for School
- d. Transition to Secondary School
- e. Healthy Body, Healthy Mind

## 2. Ways to Learn

- a. Toolkit

## 3. Your Teen & You

- a. Thoughts on Going to Secondary School
- b. Problem Solving Worksheet
- c. Door Openers and Door Slammers
- d. Ten Chances to Chat with your Child
- e. Making New Friends
- f. A Teen's Personal Guide to Managing Stress
- g. Quick Relaxation
- h. Bullying, and what to do about it
- i. Other Useful Resources & Links



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1.

# GETTING READY FOR THE MOVE



## Communication skills

Good communication skills continue to be the foundations of learning, emotional development and socialising throughout secondary school. Certain aspects of language develop in secondary school – complex verbal reasoning, understanding and using figurative language, telling more involved stories, and using more sophisticated social communication skills. In the secondary school classroom language is a fundamental skill for participation in and access to the curriculum.

## Comprehension Monitoring

Comprehension monitoring is an important metacognitive skill for learning at secondary school. It involves a student monitoring their own understanding of both spoken and written information, and being able to use strategies to help support their understanding when needed.

Your child would benefit from being encouraged to use the following **strategies** to help support their comprehension monitoring at secondary school:

- **Asking questions to clarify information** e.g. asking their teacher to explain what something means if they don't understand
- Asking for information to be **repeated or broken down** into one step at a time to make it easier to follow and process when needed.
- **Using a dictionary** to look up the meaning of new words that they come across and recording new words and their meanings in a vocabulary notebook.
- Try to **model** these strategies when you are talking to your child at home or helping them with their school work e.g. pretend that you don't know what something means and ask them to explain it to you or show them how you use a dictionary to look up word meanings.

## Vocabulary for Secondary School

Moving from primary school to secondary school introduces lots of new vocabulary that a child needs to know for everyday school activities. In the group we will introduce some new words such as lockers, timetable, assembly, journal, study, class tutor, year head, core subjects, optional subjects, junior cert, leaving cert, transition year, and extra-curricular.

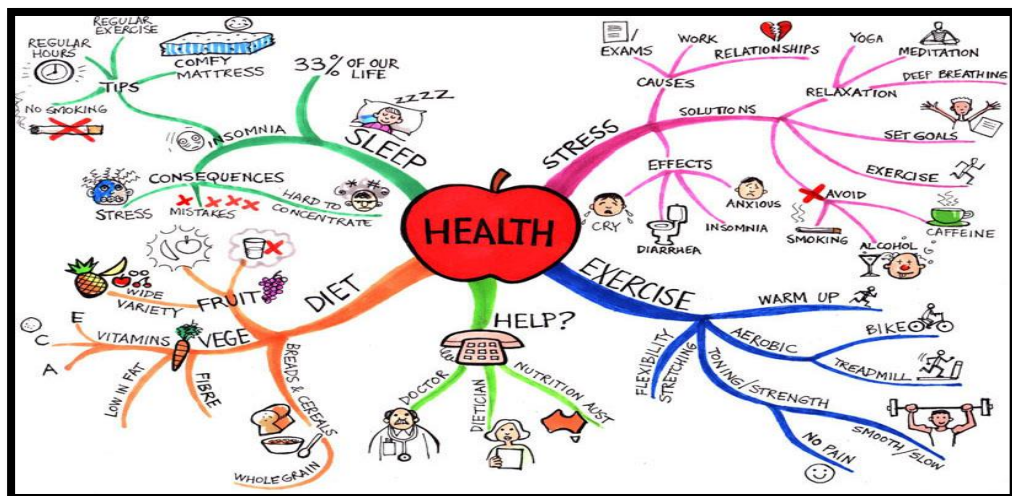
### To help develop your child's vocabulary:

After school discuss the new subjects at home with your child – getting your child to explain what they have learnt so far in a particular subject will give them a chance to use new words that they have learned and also a chance to say if they haven't yet understood some new vocabulary if they can't explain something to you. Your child's vocabulary will increase hugely in secondary school – pupils learn approximately 7-10 new words per day. They will be introduced to "learning vocabulary" (such as revise, highlight, copy, summarise) as well as specific subject vocabulary.

- Introduce a few new words at a time- go through your child’s homework with them, identify the new words and pick out a few words to focus on each week.
- Make a list of the target vocabulary so your child knows which words he is expected to learn.
- Explain the word in a simple way your child can understand
- Ask your child to explain what the word means
- Use multi-sensory learning when possible:
  - See it
  - Hear it
  - Say it – on its own and in a sentence
  - Read it
  - Write it – on its own and in a sentence
- Reinforce new words by repeating them and discussing their meaning regularly over a long period of time

### Being Word Wise:

- Think of the meaning:
  - Describe it (description)
  - What does it do? (function)
  - What else can you do with it? (function)
  - Where might you find it? (location)
  - What group does it belong to? (category)
  - What else is it like? (similarity)
  - What else does it make you think of? (association)
- Think of the sound:
  - Is it a long or short word? (length)
  - What sound does it start with? (initial)
  - Can you think of any other sounds in the word? (other sounds)
  - Can you think of a word to rhyme with it? (rhyme)
  - How many syllables does it have? (rhythm)
- Use visual strategies where possible – mind maps and vocabulary maps to help your child learn new vocabulary and concepts. Below is an example of a mind map for Health:



## Social conversation skills

At secondary school your child will have opportunities to develop their social skills, get involved in different social activities, and make new friends. In order to help them get to know their peers at school, your child will benefit from practice with developing conversational skills such as greeting, initiating, listening, taking turns, staying on topic, and keeping the conversation going.

### Here are some ideas for helping your child develop their social conversation skills for getting to know their peers at secondary school:

- When you are watching people having conversations on TV, talk to your child about what they are doing well / what they could be doing differently (e.g. how they are starting conversations, taking turns to talk, using body language, eye contact etc.)
- **Brainstorm** together **ideas for topics** that your child could talk to their peers about at school (e.g. hobbies, music, tv) and **ideas for starting conversations** or questions they could ask to get to know their peers (e.g. where did you go to primary school?)
- Talk about **ways to join in a group conversation and keep the conversation going** (e.g. Waiting until there is a gap and joining in with a comment or question related to the topic being discussed)
- **Role play** scenarios with your child where they can practice skills with you such as starting or joining a conversation.
- Give **specific positive feedback** on the things your child is doing well in conversation (e.g. 'I really liked how you asked me that question to keep the conversation going- that showed me that you were really listening to me and interested in talking to me').
- Encourage your child to set themselves **conversation challenges** for school (e.g. tomorrow I am going to try to join in a group conversation at breaktime).
- Talk to your child's school about setting up opportunities for **small group interaction** (e.g. a breaktime chat club where they can practise their conversation skills with peers)
- Encourage your child to join social **after school activities** for opportunities to interact with peers (e.g. clubs, drama, sports etc.)
- **Reflect** on social situations with your child and help them to identify what they did well and if there is anything they could do differently next time.

*If your child is having difficulty with their communication skills at secondary school talk to your Speech and Language Therapist.*



## 10 Ways to Help Your Child Get Organised

Developing good organisational skills is a key ingredient for success in school and in life. Although some people are by nature more organized than others, anyone can put routines and systems in place to help a child "get it together."

### 1. Use a diary or checklists:

Help your child get into the habit of keeping a "to-do" list. Use checklists to post assignments, household chores, and reminders about what materials to bring to class. Your child should keep a journal or diary dedicated to listing homework assignments. Crossing completed items off the list will give a sense of accomplishment.



### 2. Organize homework assignments.

Before beginning a homework session, encourage your child to number assignments in the order in which they should be done. They should start with one that's not too long or difficult but avoid saving the longest or hardest assignments for last.

### 3. Designate a study space.

Your child should study in the same place every night. This doesn't have to be a bedroom, but it should be a quiet place with few distractions. All school supplies and materials should be nearby. If your young child wants to study with you nearby, too, you'll be better able to monitor progress and encourage good study habits.



### 4. Set a designated study time.

Your child should know that a certain time every day is reserved for studying and doing homework. The best time is usually not right after school — most young people benefit from time to unwind first. Include your child in making this decision. If they don't have homework, reserved time should be used to review lessons, read for pleasure, or work on an upcoming projects.



## **5. Keep school resources organized.**

Help your child keep track of books and copies for each subject by colour coding them. Organizing materials using clear Ziploc folders per subject can be useful. Folders for loose sheets can also be useful and use dividers to separate class notes. Use a see-through pencil case so that stationary can be easily found and seen. Combination locks can be easier for lockers, as keys are likely to get lost.

## **6. Conduct a weekly cleanup.**

Encourage your child to sort through book bags and notebooks on a weekly basis. Old tests and papers should be organised and kept in a separate file at home.

## **7. Create a household schedule.**

Try to establish and stick to a regular dinnertime and a regular bedtime. This will help your child fall into a pattern at home. Young people with a regular bedtime go to school well-rested. Try to limit television-watching and online play to specific periods of time during the day.

## **8. Keep a master calendar.**

Keep a large, wall-sized calendar for the household, listing the family's commitments, schedules for extracurricular activities, days off from school, and major events at home and at school. Note dates when your child has big exams, class tests or due dates for projects. This will help family members keep track of each other's activities and avoid scheduling conflicts.



## **9. Prepare for the day ahead.**

Before your child goes to bed, they should pack schoolwork and books in a book bag (see homework routine prompt sheet). The next day's clothes should be laid out with shoes, socks, and accessories. This will cut down on morning confusion and allow your child to prepare quickly for the day ahead.

## **10. Provide needed support while your child is learning to become more organized.**

Remember that your child is learning as skill for life and assist them when needed. Gently remind them about filling in calendar dates, and homework diaries and keeping papers and materials organized. Most important, set a good example.

*Adapted from "Tips for Developing Organizational Skills in Children" by the [Coordinated Campaign for Learning Disabilities \(CCLD\)](#). Call 1-888-478-6463 for important resources and information about learning disabilities.*





# Getting Organised for School: Student Sheets



*Some tips and worksheets to help you for the school routine.*

## BEFORE STARTING SCHOOL IN SEPTEMBER:

- Is your name on all your books and copies?
- Is your name on your uniform (including PE items)?
- Colour-code your subjects on the timetable so they are easy to see quickly – if possible, cover or mark your copies and workbooks for that subject with the same colour.
- See through Ziploc folders can be used to keep copies, books and worksheets from a subject together.
- Put a list in your locker and at home of your subjects and what books and things you need for this class (see worksheet)
- Use a see-through pencil case as it is easier to check you have everything.
- Have a solid lunch box that will keep your food separate from your books and resources.



## GOING TO SCHOOL:

- Check your timetable every morning before you go to school to make sure you have all that you will need for the day (Books, equipment, PE gear etc)
- Remember you don't have to bring in all your books everyday - just the ones you need for the subjects that day.



## DURING SCHOOL:

- Use your locker to co-ordinate the books you need for the next subjects at a time. Remember that you will be able to return to your locker at lunch and breaks to get more books.
- Use your journal/ diary at the end of every subject to record your homework



## BEFORE COMING HOME FROM SCHOOL:

- Look at your homework journal and see which books and items you need that night – remember you don't have to bring all your books home, only the ones you need. Store the others in your locker.

## HOMEWORK ROUTINE

- Check your homework journal every night.
- Put your homework routine sheet up in a study space.



## TAKING DOWN HOMEWORK:

Now that you have more subjects it will help to be good at taking down homework correctly.

The important details to take down are:

- **The subject**
- **The specific homework**
- **When is it due in by?**

Sometimes it can help to write the subjects for the day in the diary ahead of time.

**January 2014**  
Eanáir • Janvier • Enero • Januar

Jan 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131

**Week 2**

**6 MONDAY** Luan • Lundi • Lunes • Montag

*SUBJECT* *DUE* ✓

**7 TUESDAY** Máirt • Mardi • Martes • Dienstag

*SUBJECT* *DUE* ✓

**8 WEDNESDAY** Céadaoin • Mercredi • Miércoles • Mittwoch

*SUBJECT* *DUE* ✓

**9 THURSDAY** Déardaoin • Jeudi • Jueves • Donnerstag

*SUBJECT* *DUE* ✓

**10 FRIDAY** Aoine • Vendredi • Viernes • Freitag

*SUBJECT* *DUE* ✓

**11 SATURDAY** **SUNDAY 12**

*Teachers' Comments*

*Signature:*

*Parent's/Guardian's Comments (to be signed)*

*Signature:*

**A5**





Different image for every week

Historical Fact for every week

John Lennon, ex-member of the Beatles assassinated in New York



# My Homework Routine.....

<p><b>Empty my school bag</b></p> 	<p><b>Throw out the rubbish</b></p> 	<p><b>Give any important notes or messages to my parents</b></p> 	<p><b>Organise my books into piles by subject</b></p> 
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<p><b>Look in my homework journal</b></p> 	<p><b>Do my homework (stick to the agreed times)</b></p> 	<p><b>Pack my school bag for tomorrow</b></p> 	<p><b>Leave my bag by the front door ready for the morning</b></p> 
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# Transition to Secondary School

## Energy

Secondary school will require extra physical demands due to extra bag weight, increased walking distances in a bigger school and walking between classes. Therefore, it is important to use any equipment/ aids provided by your primary therapist that may aid with conserving energy.

## School Bag Guidelines



### Choosing a Bag:

- Make sure it has two thick padded straps. The wider the straps the better. Avoid narrow thin straps that may dig into your shoulders. Look for adjustable shoulder straps so that the bag can fit closely to your back.
- Avoid bags with one strap which spread the load of the backpack unevenly in the spine
- Look for a backpack with a waist strap, this helps distribute the weight across the body
- Choose a bag with compartments so that it is easy to arrange and organise your bag
- Don't try to save money by buying the biggest bag – make sure the bag is the right size for your back. When the shoulder straps are adjusted and reasonably tight, the bottom of the bag should be above your waist, the bag should not be hanging down over your bottom
- A bag with a padded back is more comfortable and prevents you from being poked by books or sharp objects.

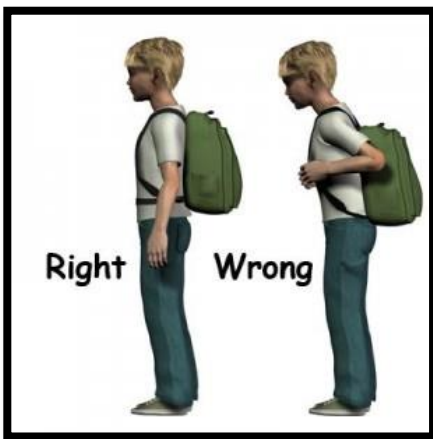
### Packing Your Bag:

- Place the heaviest books / items closest to your back so that the weight is as near to your spine as possible
- Place sharp or awkward items away from your back so that they don't dig into you
- Use your locker regularly so that you don't have to take all your books home at the end of the evening
- Plan what books you need for homework so that you only have to bring those books home

- If you carry a water bottle – see if you can fill it in school so that you don't have to carry that extra weight
- Clean out your school bag regularly so that you get rid of anything you don't need to be carrying around with you

### How to Lift Your Bag:

- Bend your knees and pick it up with two hands and put it onto your desk. Then turn around and facing away from your bag put on the straps. This will prevent you from bending and twisting which is most harmful to your back. This should be done in reverse for taking off your bag.



### Maximum Weight Guidelines:

- Your School Bag should not weigh more than 10% of your body weight. So, if you weigh 50kgs (7st 12lbs), your school bag should not weigh more than 5kgs (11lbs)

### Warning Signs that the School Bag is too Heavy:

- Change in posture when wearing the school bag
- Struggling to put on or take off the bag
- Pain when wearing the bag
- Tingling or numbness in the arms
- Red marks on the shoulders

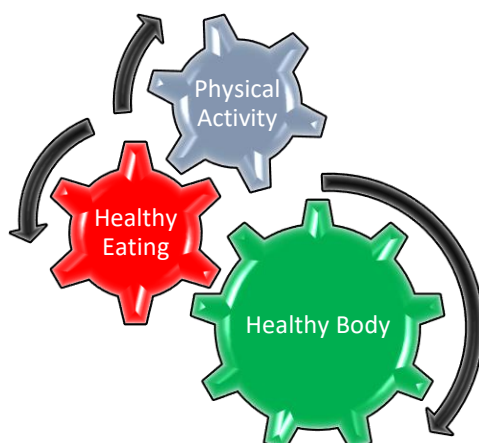
## School Shoes



### When choosing school shoes consider the following;

- Shoes should have a reasonably **thick sole** and broad based for stability. Very flat shoes such as pumps, are not good for posture or your back and spinal alignment.
- Shoes should be supportive with a supportive heel. The heel of your shoe should be stiff and the side's not movable if you squeeze it.
- The forefoot of the shoe should be flexible and bend across the ball of the foot.
- **Laces should be tied on shoes** as this will provide extra support to the arches of the feet.
- Fastening: shoes should be held on the foot with laces, straps or Velcro fastenings across the top of the foot, and a closed heel or heel strap across the back of the foot.

## Healthy Body-Healthy Mind!



Young people should engage in moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes per day.

Vigorous intensity activities including those that strengthen muscle and bone should be incorporated at least three days a week.

Moderate Activity	Vigorous Activity
Heart is beating faster than normal, breathing is harder than normal.	Heart is beating much faster than normal and breathing is much harder than normal.

Moderate activities; jogging, bike riding, fast walking, nature hikes, skateboarding, rollerblading

Vigorous activities; fast running, sports such as swimming or football, dancing, martial arts such as karate, riding a bike fast and up hills

### What are activities that involve strengthening muscle and bone?

These are activities that involve using your body weight or working against resistance.

Examples;

- Sports such as gymnastics, tennis, hurling, football, rugby
- Activities that involve jumping and hopping such as skipping ropes
- Activities that involve upper body work such as rock-climbing walls, rope climbing, tug of war



Remember to reduce the amount of time that you're sedentary by watching less TV, playing less video games or using the computer.

### Why is it important?



- It improves cardiovascular (heart) health
- Maintains a healthy body weight



- Improves bone health
- Helps to make new friends and develop new social skills
- Helps to reduce stress
- Helps you sleep better which will help you perform better in school

The main thing to remember is to participate in activities that are fun & you enjoy!!



## Healthy Eating

- Eat at least 5 servings of fruit & vegetables a day
- Eat a variety of foods to ensure you get all the nutrients you need
- Eat breakfast everyday, why not make your lunch to bring to school!
- Avoid take aways, processed food, fizzy drinks, fatty foods, too much sweets, crisps and chocolate. Remember these are treats and treats aren't eaten every day!

Use the Food Pyramid to plan your healthy food choices every day and watch your portion size





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# 2.

# WAYS TO LEARN



# LEARNING TOOLKIT

Use the knowledge in the toolkit to help you on your journey in secondary school.

**Step 1** – You work out how you learn

**Step 2** – You work out what study strategies work best for you, thinking about how you learn. For example...

- Mind maps
- Summarised Notes
- Diagrams
- Revision books

**Step 3** – You work out how to practise using this knowledge you have gained through studying/revising to be successful in meeting your target grade or even exceeding it!

**Step 4** – You know how to prepare for a class tests and have a good technique which will help you get the grade you deserve.

**Step 5** – You can complete a learning action plan to get you on the road to success!



# Types of Learners

There are many ways to remember facts and how to apply them, whether it is for studying or for when you complete a test.

Not every method will work for you – this is because everyone has preferred ways of learning.

Therefore, to understand what the best methods of remembering things are, you have to understand how you prefer to learn first!

Look at the descriptions below to see what the main ways to learn are:

## A visual learner:

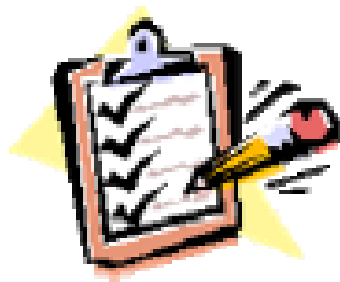
- Prefers to read, to see the words, illustrations and diagrams.
- Talks quite fast, using lots of images.
- Memorises by writing repeatedly.
- When inactive, looks around, doodles or watches something.
- When starting to understand something says, 'that looks right'.
- Is most distracted by untidiness.

## An auditory learner:

- Likes to be told, to listen to the teacher, to talk it out.
- Talks fluently, in a logical order, and with few hesitations.
- Memorises by repeating words aloud.
- When inactive, talks to self or others.
- When starting to understand something says, 'that sounds right'.
- Is most distracted by noises.


## A kinaesthetic learner:

- Likes to get involved, hands on, to try it out.
- Uses lots of hand movements.
- Talks about actions and feelings; speaks more slowly.
- Memorises by doing something repeatedly.
- When inactive, fidgets, walks around.
- When starting to understand something says, 'that feels right'.
- Is most distracted by movement or physical disturbance.



## Types of Learning Style

You can do all of these if you try but you might prefer one of them or even two of them. Look below and see which ones you prefer:




<b>When You do this...</b>	<b>Do you do this...?</b>		
	<b>Visual</b> 	<b>Auditory</b> 	<b>Physical</b> 
<b>Spell a word</b>	Try to visualise it (Does it look right?)	Sound it out (Does it sound right?)	Write it down (Does it feel right?)
<b>Concentrate</b>	Get most distracted by untidiness?	Get most distracted by noises	Get most distracted by movement, or physical disturbance
<b>Choose a favourite art form</b>	Prefer Paintings	Prefer music	Prefer dance/ sculpture
<b>Talk</b>	Talk quite fast, but keep idle conversation limited. Use lots of images, e.g. 'It's like a needle in a haystack.'	Talk fluently with an even pace, in a logical order and with few hesitations. Enunciate clearly.	Use lots of hand movements talk about actions and feelings. Speak more slowly with longer pauses
<b>Meet People</b>	Remember mostly how they looked/the surroundings	Remember mostly what was said/remember their names	Remember mostly what you did with them/ remember their emotions
<b>See a movie, watch TV or read books</b>	Remember best what the scenes/ what the people looked like	Remember best what was said- and how the music sounded	Remember best what happened/ the character's emotions
<b>Relax</b>	Generally, prefer reading/TV	Generally, prefer music	Generally, prefer games/ sports
<b>Try to interpret someone's mood</b>	Mainly note their facial expression	Listen to their tone of voice	Watch body movements
<b>Are Recalling Something</b>	Remember what you saw/ people's faces/ how things looked	Remember what was said/ people's names/jokes	Remember what was done-what it feels like
<b>Are Memorising Something</b>	Prefer to memorise by writing something repeatedly	Prefer to memorise by repeating words aloud	Prefer to memorise by doing something repeatedly
<b>Are Choosing Clothes</b>	Choose almost exclusively by how they look, how they coordinate and by the colours	Take a lot of notice of the brand name, what the clothes 'say' about you	Choose mainly on how they feel, the comfort, the texture
<b>Are Angry</b>	Become silent and seething	Express it in an outburst	Storm about, clench your fist, throw things
<b>Are Inactive</b>	Look around, doodle, watch something	Talk to yourself or others	Fidget, walk about

## Apply your Learning Style

So ..how does this understanding make a difference to how you remember and apply information?



Look at the table below and note what activities someone with your preferred learning style would like to do and therefore activities to aid learning.

Preferred Learning Style	Activities	Example Strategies
Visual 	Diagrams, charts, videos, films, graphs, posters, concept maps, pamphlets, textbooks, drawing, visualisation (creating mental pictures), collages, colour highlighting	Mind maps, spider diagrams, create a story using pictures, 'Look, cover, Write, Check' with lists and key words, summarising.
Auditory 	Discussion, group work, pair work, debates, interviewing, expositions, presentations, improvisation, listening to guest speakers, mnemonics, writing notes and essays, poems, sketches, stories and reading.	Mnemonics, sharing and testing ideas with your friends as part of a game, make up a pop song with the key words or themes in the lyrics and then record it.
Kinaesthetic 	DART, role-play, dance, model making, simulations, 'show me' cards, freeze frames, improvisation, associating ideas with movements, human graphs, human sentences or timelines, field trips, games, competitions	Put post-it notes around the house with key words in them and walk around the house testing yourself. Create a dance which shows a sequence of ideas like a chemical reaction.

If you still do not understand a topic, or an idea linked to the topic, then do not be an ostrich and put your head in the sand. ASK SOMEONE or FIND OUT - a class teacher, resource teacher, your year head, a friend, a parent.



## Completing a Learning Plan

Ask yourself the following questions:

- How many weeks to my first test/class based assessment?
- What is the maximum amount of time that I am willing to revise on a weekday, a Saturday and on a typical Sunday?
- How many topics am I expected to revise for each subject?
- How hard do I find each topic and how big is each topic?

Using the answers from the above questions to note down in a Revision Planner how many hours you might need to revise each one. There is a blank template of one under the example below.

NOTE - THE TOPICS IN THE EXAMPLE ARE NOT THE ONES YOU WILL NEED TO REVISE!

### Revision Planner for Science (sample)

Topic	Time Needed	Completed/Help Required
Science: Paper 1		
Inheritance and Selection	1 Hour (OK)	
Structures and Bonding	1 Hour (OK)	
Waves and Radiation	2 Hours (HARD)	
Humans as Organisms	½ Hour (EASY)	
Maintenance of Life	½ Hour (EASY)	
Metals	½ Hour (EASY)	





## Action Plan

This can help you to decide how you go about studying and learning from various subjects.

My Learning Style is .....

The Learning Strategies that work for me are

.....  
.....  
.....

I hope to learn about

.....  
.....  
.....

The resources I have used are

.....  
.....  
.....

The learning goals are

.....  
.....

I have filled in a Revision Planner and a Revision Calendar. (Tick if you have)

The support I will find to help me with the whole process is....

.....  
.....  
.....

## Remember!

The key is **ORGANISATION AND USING STRATEGIES WHICH WORK FOR YOU...**

Just Give It a Try! 😊



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# 3.

# YOUR TEEN & YOU



## Thoughts on Going to Secondary School (from ParentsPlus and NurtureShock)

- Parents are encouraged to set a few rules, explain why the rules were there and expect rules are obeyed. However, parents are encouraged to promote your child's autonomy and freedom to make decisions. Getting the balance is important.
- When problems arise, get your teenager involved in finding solutions. Listen first to fully understand their view, then speak respectfully. Encourage brainstorming to think up lots of possible solutions. Help your teen choose the best solutions and agree to a plan. Later, review how it went with your teenager and offer more support if necessary.
- Solutions generated by teenagers are more likely to be carried through by them. Though it is tempting to come up with your own answers, it is crucial to proceed at the teenager's pace and to wait for them to generate the solutions.
- Some conflict between parents and older children is normal. It is a healthy sign of their developing independence and growing. Teenagers can see arguing as negotiation, a way of becoming more independent. Listening to your teenager, trying to understand their viewpoint and compromising strengthens bonds and develops your relationship.
- Protected sleep time of teenagers is very important. Teenagers need 9.2 hours of sleep. Sleep is essential to your child's physical, mental wellbeing and academic performance.
- Give specific praise for effort. Teenagers are able to recognise honesty. General praise ('You're so great') will not ring as true as specific praise ('Great job taking time for homework!'). Praise effort, rather than results only to help keep teenagers motivated.
- Some parents are strict whilst others avoid conflict. You can strive to reach a 'middle ground' where you are supportively involved, while being firm and helping to learn and grow into self-confident adults. Parenting has been described like a plane journey. When the child is young, the parent was in the pilot's seat. As the child gets older, the child is invited into the cockpit and taught to operate controls. With a teenager, a parent becomes 'co-pilot' as the teenager tries out new skills. The parent offers encouragement, guidance and lets the teenager learn from mistakes and achievements, teaching the teenager to be responsible.
- The challenge for parents is to negotiate disagreements with their child in a way that is respectful and maintains relationships. When a parent says, 'You're too young to understand,' and the teen says, 'You're too old to know what it's like these days,' both are saying, 'Your judgment is impaired.' Both are on the defensive.
- Be assertive through the following ways. Remain calm and positive. Take responsibility for your feelings by using an "I" message, "When I hear/see X (behaviour), I feel Y (emotion)". Express positive intentions. Focus on what you want to happen. Encourage your child to be assertive.
- Trust your own gut instinct to what's best for you and your family. Every family and child are different.

# Problem Solving Worksheet

This is a template to help you and your child/teenager to go about solving problems that arise at home or in relation to school (of course it can also be used with problems specific to making the transition to secondary school).

## Problem Situation

1) What is the problem you want to solve?

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2) What do you want to happen instead? What would everyday look like if the problem didn't exist?

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## Think of the best way to respond

1) What is going on for my child during the problem?

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2) What is going on for me during the problem?

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## Thinking up of Solutions

1) What are some possible solutions?

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2) It is useful to remember any ideas you have tried to use in the past that have worked a little bit or been helpful (even to a small extent)?

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## Plan of Action

1) Discipline Plan - for when the problem happens again (if necessary/relevant)

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2) Prevention Plan - to teach child how to behave in the long term

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# Door Openers and Door Slammers

(from familyeducation.com)

Communication is a crucial parenting skill. One important tool that parents have is being certain to use "door openers," as opposed to "door slammers."

**Door openers** are open-ended responses that do not convey evaluation or judgment. They allow the child to share more and to be open in talking to you. They give the message that what makes you as a parent happy is honesty, not your child acting a certain way.

**Door slammers** are just the opposite; they convey to your child that you do not wish to have this discussion with her or that you are not willing to listen to their opinion. They make your child feel that you will not listen to them. They shut the door on any communication.

**Door Openers** include:

- "Would you like to share more about that?"
- "That's a good question."
- "I don't know, but I can try to find out."
- "That's interesting."
- "Do you know what that means?"
- "That sounds important to you."
- "Do you want to talk about it?"
- "I'm here when you want to talk."
- "What made you think about that?"
- "O really?"
- "I never thought about that."
- "What do you think?"

**Door Slammers** include:

- "Don't talk to me in that tone of voice!"
- "No."
- "You are too young to understand."
- "If you say that again, I'll . . ."
- "That's none of your business."
- "I don't care what your friends are doing!"
- "Don't ask so many questions. Just do it."
- "We'll talk about that when you need to know."
- "That's just for boys/girls."
- "Why are you asking me that?"
- "You don't need to know about that."
- "Don't worry about that."

# Ten Chances to Chat with your Child

## (taken from About.com)

Your kids are busy. You're busy. It's not easy cutting through all the rat racing and text messaging and homeworking and get down to two people talking, yet communication is your best chance to catch serious problems before or when they start. Take advantage of these 10 opportunities to strike up a conversation with your child.

### **1. In the car**

Nothing like a captive audience to get a conversation going. Your child might also appreciate the ability to talk without eye contact.

### **2. In the morning**

Your child might be more open to talking before all the daily hassles of life are layered on. If so, you could make effort to get up earlier.

### **3. Before Bed**

Sometimes your child could have their guard down at night and could bring out thoughts and feelings that are hard to share during the day.

### **4. On an afternoon out**

Every once in awhile, you could plan a small outing with your child. You could go for a snack at a café or to a bookstore or shop.

### **5. On a walk**

Grab your child for a stroll, to walk a pet, or to walk to a nearby errand. Get fit and get informed at the same time.

### **6. While You're Waiting**

In a doctor's waiting room, in the queue at the shop, wherever you have time on your hands, take up the opportunity to talk a little.

### **7. On a break**

If your child's working on a tough homework assignment, schedule a little break for a drink, stretch and a chat. Either a break from work will be an incentive for your child to talk, or having to talk will be incentive to get back to work.

### **8. During a meal**

It can be hard to take time to sit down at the table to eat, but doing so is an opportunity for talking, even if you have your mouth full at times.

### **9. While watching TV**

TV gives a nice break sometimes, but watching it with your child can also be helpful to give prompts for conversation starters. Ask if the events or characters are true to your child's life or if things are different.

### **10. Anytime and All the time**

The best way to get your child to talk is to be open and available for talk. Let your child know you enjoy their company and conversation.

## Making New Friends

Sometimes making new friends can be hard, because everyone seems to get into groups very quickly. However, you can mix with new people too. Here are some tips to consider that can help you to get to know new people and make friends in your new school.

- **Make sure you are kind to whoever you meet at the new school.** Try to be nice to everyone of all cultures and backgrounds.
- **Take a deep breath.** You shouldn't be nervous; you're going to a new school, not to torture. Remember that in your new school you will find kids your age. You're going to meet people who like you there. Don't judge others before you get to know them.
- **Be yourself, no need to show off.** Never change who you are to try and fit in. If your friends don't accept you for you, they're not really friends. Most people belong with a certain 'gang' simply because they are being themselves and their unique personalities and interests are the same. For example if you're interested in football, you're likely to hang out with other guys that play football.
- **Be inviting.** A [smile](#) goes a long way. When you [walk](#) in the halls, don't hunch over your books or keep your eyes on the floor. Stick your chin up and make eye contact with other people. If you see someone you know, give a smile or say hi. [Introduce yourself](#). Tell them your name and where you're from. Ask a question: Chat about the new school, or a new movie that's out in the cinema. What other ways can you think of to get a conversation going?
- **Remember their names.** People like it when you call them by name, but they can get annoyed if they don't remember. Ask them gently if they have a nickname. You'd be surprised where this can come in handy.
- **Do something nice for someone.** Treat other students the way you would like to be treated. Save someone a seat. Say "hi" in the hall. Give congratulations for a job well done.
- **Join after school activities you like.** Get a good balance between work and play. For example, join a football or drama club. Even if you don't know anyone there, you'll all share a common interest, and you can experience with different personalities from yours that have the same interest!
- **Don't sit at the back of the class where other people don't notice you!** Try to sit in the middle where you're around everyone and can make conversation.
- **Finally, meet up with them outside of school once you get to know them.** This is an important to step to making TRUE friends who you can rely on.



# A Teen's Personal Guide for Managing Stress

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## What is Stress?

Stress is the uncomfortable feeling you get when you're worried, scared, angry, frustrated or overwhelmed. It is caused by emotions, but it also affects your mood and body. Many adults think that teens don't have stress because they don't have to work and support a family. They are missing the point and wrong!

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## What causes Stress?

*Stress comes from many different places.*

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- From your parents. "Don't disappoint me, clean up, hurry up, finish this, do your homework, go out for the team, practice your music, try out for the school play, do your best, stay out of trouble, make more friends, don't ever try drugs."
  - From your friends. "How'd you do on the test, try this, prove you're not a loser, don't hang out with them, don't wear that."
  - Even from yourself. "I need to lose weight, build my muscles, wear the right clothes, get better grades, score more goals, show my parents I'm not a kid anymore."
- 

*And from*

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- Watching my parents argue
  - Figuring out how to be independent
  - Feeling pressure to get good grades
  - Thinking about the future
  - Being pressured to do something you know is bad for you, like smoking
  - Not being good enough at sports
  - Worrying about how your body's changing
  - Dealing with sexual feelings
  - Worrying about neighbourhood or world problems
  - Feeling guilty
- 

## How does the body Handle Stress?

There are two short definitions:

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**Hormone:** a chemical made by one part of the body that travels through your blood and sends messages to the rest of the body.

**Nervous System:** the brain, spinal cord, and all the nerves. The nerves send messages between your brain and the rest of your body.

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The body is a finely tuned machine that can change quickly to do what we need it to do, like react to stress. The body has two nervous systems. The voluntary system does what you choose to have it do- walk, talk, move. The involuntary system keeps the body running without your even thinking about it- breathe, eat, digest. The body has 2 different nerve pathways in the involuntary system. One works while we're relaxed, and the other works when there's an emergency. These 2 systems can't work together at the same time. It's important to know this because we can shut off the emergency system by flipping a switch and turning on the relaxed system.

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### Is stress always bad?

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Even though stress is uncomfortable, it's not always a bad thing. Sometimes stress helps us deal with tough situations. A lot of stress changes our bodies quickly and helps us to react to an emergency. A little stress keeps us alert and helps us work harder.

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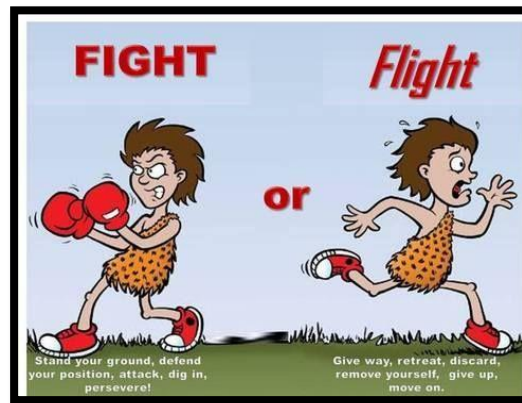
Ages ago, when people lived in the jungle- where a tiger might leap out at any moment- the emergency nervous system was key to survival. Imagine your great, great, great ancestors, Sam and Zelda, munching on some berries. Suddenly they saw a tiger and had to run! Hormones gave them the burst of energy they needed to escape.

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How did their bodies react? First, Sam and Zelda got that sinking feeling in their stomachs as the blood in their bellies quickly went to their legs so they could take off. Then when they jumped to their feet, their hearts beat faster to pump more blood. As they ran from the tiger, they breathed faster to take in more air. Their sweat cooled them as they ran. Their pupils became bigger so they would see in the dark, in case they needed to jump over a log while running away. They didn't think about anything but running because they weren't supposed to stop and figure out a friendly way to work it all out with the tiger.

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Our ancestors never would have survived without the stress reaction, but stress helps us do more than run. It keeps us alert and prepared for the next lurking tiger. Few of us need to outrun tigers today, but we will all have problems and worries that turn on some of those exact same stress responses, like that panicky feeling you sometimes get when you're studying for a big test. Your heart beats fast. Your breathing becomes heavier. You sweat and get flashes of heat because your hormones are confused about why you aren't listening to them. Why are you standing still when they are telling you to run?



### If Stress Is a Survival Tool, Why Does it Make us Feel Awful?

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Sam and Zelda had few choices when the tiger chased them. Either the tiger ate them, or they escaped. As sick as it sounds, if they'd been eaten, they wouldn't have had much to worry about anymore, right? If they lived, you can be sure their burst of energy allowed them to outrun the tiger or at least outrun Zok (their slower friend who was eaten by the tiger). In their run for survival, Sam and Zelda used up every drop of their hormone burst and then took a well-deserved nap. In the modern world, our biggest worries aren't usually about life or death. We don't really have to run away from our problems. But those same stress hormones stay in our bodies because, unlike Sam and Zelda, we don't use them up by running. Instead, those hormones continue to hang around, unused and confused. They seem to be asking, "Why did my body stand still when that 'tiger' attacked?"

It would be better if we had different hormones for different stresses. Hormones to deal with parental pressure would make you love chores. Hormones related to school stress would make you focus longer and shut down your kidneys so you wouldn't need bathroom breaks. But we only have those hormones that prepare us to flee or fight. So it's really important to use your brain to decide what's a real emergency and to use exercise to use up those hormone bursts.

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Even when there are no real emergencies, our emotions make our bodies act like there is a huge crisis because the brain controls both emotions and stress hormones. If your brain thinks something terrible is happening, your body will react as if it really is! Even a little bit

of stress that never seems to go away can confuse the body. It makes the body work harder to prepare for an emergency that may not really be there.

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A tiger running at you is a real crisis. If you believe a mild stress (like a maths test) is an emergency, you will not be able to study. Your body will be preparing to deal with a real tiger, and you won't be able to concentrate on anything but escaping. The trick is to figure out when something really is an emergency and when your emotions are only treating it like one.

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### A Review

Stress is an important survival tool and can keep you alert and focused. But when you're not dealing with a real survival issue, it can make you uncomfortable and interfere with your ability to think through a problem.

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Stress hormones are telling us to run, so exercise uses them up.

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The body reacts to stress when the brain tells the body to prepare for an emergency.

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Emotions play an important role in how our bodies experience stress.

How we think about a stressful situation and what we choose to do about it affects how it makes us feel.

Reference: Ginsburg, K.R. & Jablow, M.M. (2011) *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Paediatrics.

Please feel free to copy this handout or download from [www.fosteringresilience.com](http://www.fosteringresilience.com) or the American Academy of Paediatrics website for parents [www.HealthyChildren.org](http://www.HealthyChildren.org)

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# Quick Relaxation

There are some stressful situations which call for a quick relaxation technique to stop a rapid build-up of tension. Some people may have sudden feelings of panic in the street or in the lift and need a quick relaxation technique in order to cope.

In order to use this technique, you need to remember that mental stress will lessen if you relax muscles.

You will also need to learn to **recognise tension** building up.

**The breathing in this exercise is abdominal breathing. When you breathe in; check that your abdomen rises. When you breathe out, your abdomen should fall.**

## THE STOP TECHNIQUE

When you feel panicky or stressed.....

1. Say "**STOP**" to yourself.
2. Breathe in through your **nose** for **three/four** seconds.  
Then breathe out through your **mouth** for **six/eight** seconds.  
As you breathe out through your mouth; drop your **shoulders** and relax your **hands**

Pause for a moment

3. Breathe in through your **nose** for **three/four** seconds  
Then breathe out through your **mouth** for **six/eight** seconds  
As you breathe out through your mouth, relax your forehead and jaw.

Use this technique **as soon as you feel tension building up**.  
This technique can be carried out without anyone noticing. It is important to **practise** this technique regularly in non-stressful situations.



# Bullying, and what to do about it.

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education, in their guidelines, as:

"unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time"

Every school has a system in place to cope with bullying and bullies. If you are being bullied, you should talk to your form teacher, year head, or any teacher within the school you feel comfortable with. If the school has a buddy or mentor system in place, it would be a good idea to talk with your buddy, as they can give you advice, listen and help.

There is a lot of help and advice available on the internet also, some useful sites are listed below:

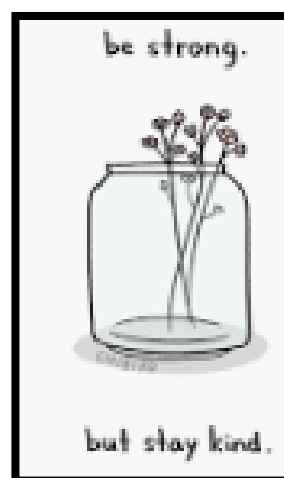
- Here you can get information on bullying, what it is, its different forms, etc. <http://www.bullying.org>
- This Department of Education site gives you information about bullying for parents and students <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Bullying/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-in-Schools.html>
- Anti-Bullying Procedures for Schools <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf>
- **The Anti-Bullying Centre** gives you information on how to manage and resources to help deal with bullying. <https://antibullyingcentre.ie/>
- **Childline Free Resources** <https://www.childline.ie/bullying-abuse-safety-and-your-rights/>

## Are you a bully?

Sometimes we don't realise our behaviour is threatening to others and we are in fact bullying. Before accusing others of bullying, ask yourself the following questions.

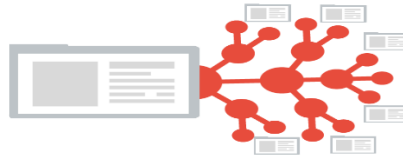
Do you..

- Call people names?
- Tease?
- Make fun of people?
- Take small possessions away from others?
- Spread gossip?
- Taunt people for being unhygienic?
- Tease about clothes?
- Exclude someone from a group?
- Damage somebody's homework / personal property?
- Initiate a fight





## Other Useful Resources & Links



- **National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Transitional Guidelines for Parents of Students with Special Educational Needs and for Schools:**

<https://ncse.ie/transitional-guidelines-for-parents-of-students-with-special-educational-needs-and-for-schools>

- **Transition to Secondary- Sharing Ideas & Experiences Of Those Who Have Gone Before You:**

<http://www.colaistemhuireask.ie/cmamain/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Parents-The-Transition-To-Secondary-School.pdf>

- **DCD in Secondary School: Let's MATCH for Success:**

[https://youtu.be/\\_qRP0CJgyMg](https://youtu.be/_qRP0CJgyMg)

- **Article on Transition to Secondary from SchoolDays.ie:**

<https://www schooldays.ie/articles/transition-from-primary-school-to-secondary-school>

- **Tips for Teens & Teachers:**

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/corknorthlee/therapy/paediatric-occupational-therapy/tips-for-teens-and-teachers.pdf>

- **Secondary School Classroom Strategies:**

[https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Secondary\\_Classroom\\_Strategies.pdf](https://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Secondary_Classroom_Strategies.pdf)

- **Increasing Potential of Students with DCD in Secondary School:**

<https://www.sensationalkids.ie/product/how-to-increase-the-potential-of-students-with-dcd-dyspraxia-in-secondary-school/>

- **Twinkl.ie Resource Pack for Secondary School Transition:**

<https://www.twinkl.ie/resource/t-c-7469-secondary-transition-resource-pack>

- **Sparknotes is a comprehensive site which covers a number of subjects**

[www.sparknotes.com](http://www.sparknotes.com)

- **HomeSchool.ie online tuition service for Irish Secondary School students.**

<https://www.homeschool.ie/>



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