

Coach for active learning: *middle school*

Being an independent, active learner is important in any setting, but in the virtual learning environment it is critical to student success.

You can help your middle school student develop an active mindset. Active learners understand that passively reading through lessons and textbook assignments, or casually viewing tutorials and movies is not sufficient.

- Students must:
 - Engage in learning by thinking deeply about concepts.
 - Self-monitor their understanding.
 - Get clarification if their understanding breaks down.
- Your middle school student will need to work independently at times and alongside you at other times. Determine when your student is ready to work independently by assessing his or her ability to complete lessons as an active learner.

Organize Lesson Content

Organizing content into a functional, note-taking format leads the learner to think at a deeper level and increases the learner's level of understanding.

- Your student should take notes that support the lesson objectives and include main ideas and details.
 - Decide on a note-taking format and guide your student on how to summarize new concepts.
 - If your student is unsure about how to effectively take notes:
 - View *Taking Noteworthy Notes* on Learning Coach Central in Daily Tasks > Navigating Lessons.
 - Contact a teacher for suggestions.
 - Conduct an Internet search for note-taking templates.
 - Review your student's notes to ensure that the notes include the words and definitions.
- Before beginning the lesson, your student should define the key vocabulary words. Many courses include a glossary in the yellow backpack at the bottom of each lesson slide.
 - Direct your student to read the words and definitions, and make connections to what he or she already knows about the words.
 - Your student should regularly use the key word definitions as he or she is reading the lesson material to help understand the content.
 - Review your student's notes to ensure that the notes include the words and definitions.

continued

Encourage Self-Monitoring

- Effective readers monitor their own understanding as they read.
 - Encourage your student to periodically stop and think as he or she reads lesson material. This can be done every few paragraphs, after each page, or after reading a paragraph with a lot of details.
 - Independent learners ask themselves who, what, where, when, why, how questions and answer appropriately.
- In many lessons, students are instructed to read material or watch a recording and answer specific questions. The questions are followed by a “Show Answer” button. The student should:
 - Follow the directions.
 - Answer the questions independently.
 - Check his or her answer by viewing the correct answer.
 - Add the questions and corresponding answers to their notes.
- For math courses, your student should:
 - Read the lesson.
 - Watch the tutorials.
 - Complete the practice problems.
 - Self-check his or her answers.
 - Use another instructional resource (e.g., teacher, Khan Academy) to further understanding of the material or practice new skills.
- For all courses:
 - Encourage your student to review related parts of lessons if an answer is incorrect.
 - Continue to work with your student until this practice of self-checking becomes habit.
- Worksheets, section review questions, and concept maps are found throughout lessons with completed versions provided at the end of many lessons.
 - Use these resources as opportunities for your student to check for understanding and as study guides for assessments.
- Portfolio assessments include grading rubrics for students to use prior to drafting the assessment and submitting it to the Drop Box.
 - Use the grading rubric alongside your student to check the assessment, determine the quality of the work, and then decide if the portfolio should be submitted or revised.
 - Your student should evaluate his or her own work independently as much as possible before submitting it to a teacher.

Get Clarification

- If your student does not understand a new concept, model the following actions and encourage your student to complete them independently:
 - Reread the content or repeat parts of the lesson leading up to the new concept.
 - Explore the topic further using another instructional tool, such as Khan Academy, found in Connexus®.
 - Contact the teacher.

