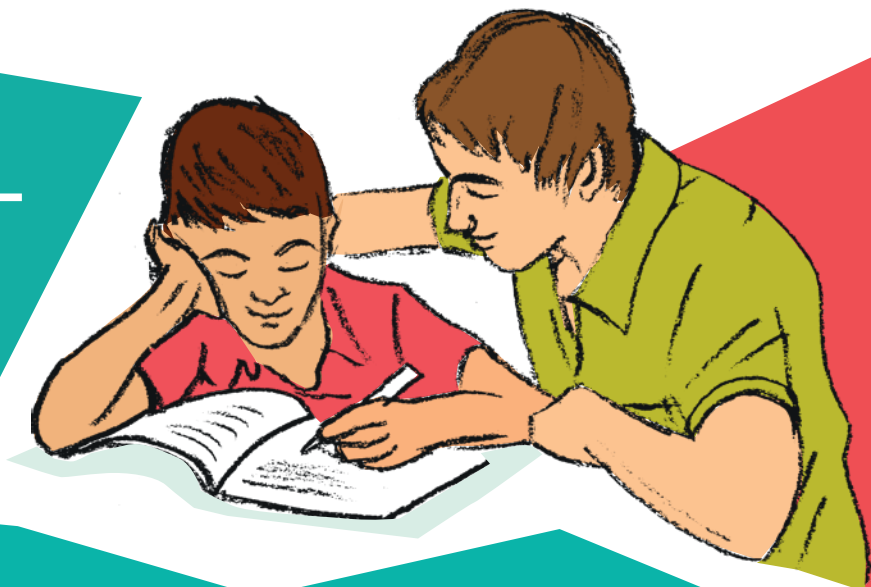
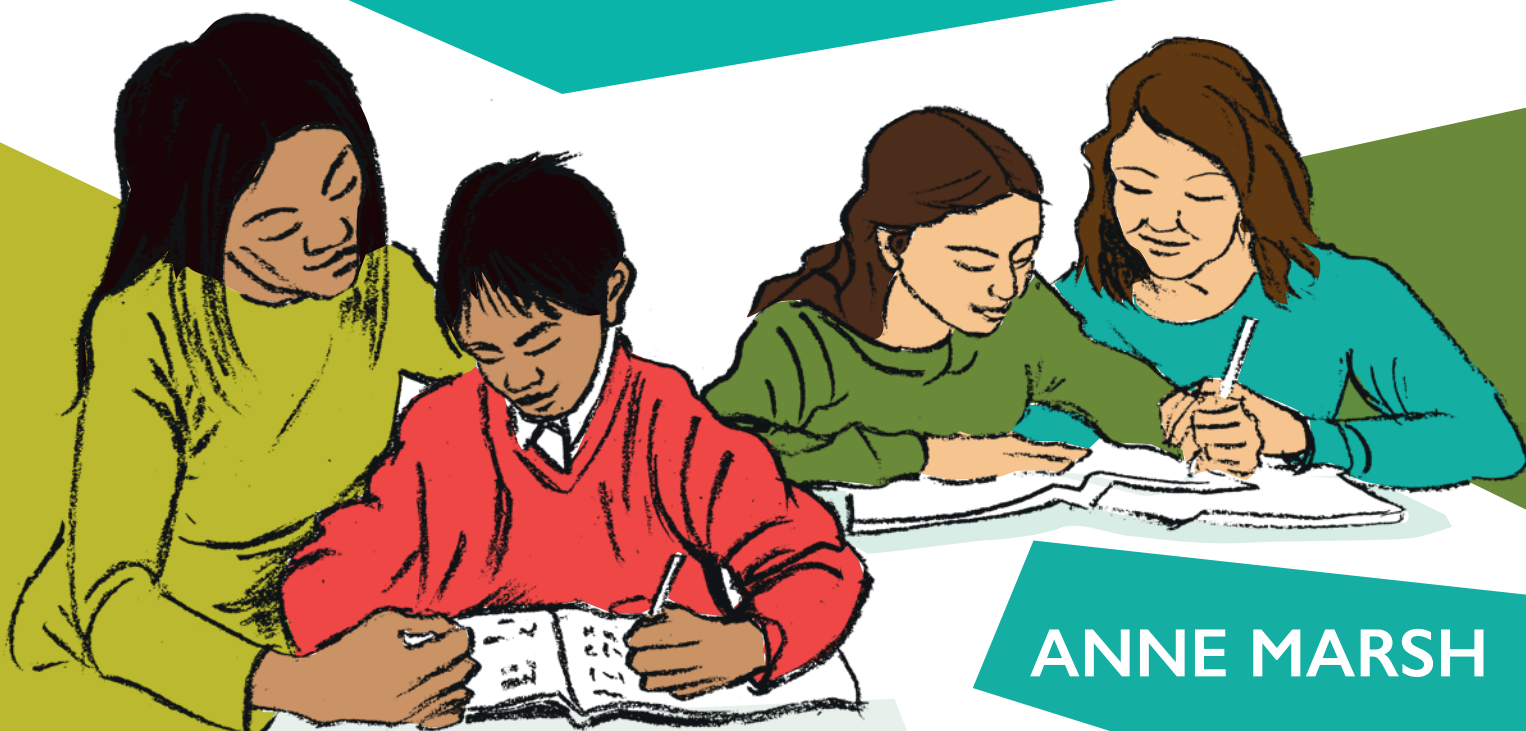


A PRACTICAL
GUIDE



How To Coach Your Children To Be Excellent Students



ANNE MARSH

Introduction

If you are reading this manual you want to make a positive difference in how your child is achieving at school, and are wondering how best to help them. Perhaps they are not doing as well as you believe they can in a particular subject area or important skill. This manual is for those who want to learn how to help their children to be successful students.

Learning is cheap - it only costs time.

Research both in New Zealand and overseas has shown that you can make a big difference in how children in your family learn, by encouraging them to regularly practise at home what they are learning in the classroom (Lam, 1997; Nash, 1993). These can be simple things such as reading, going over the letter sounds, practising adding and subtracting numbers, and times tables.

Put the most important things first in your life.

Time is an important tool. When a child has enough time to learn, and you listen closely to them and deeply believe that they will learn, **they will in time** learn new ideas and skills faster than either of you thought possible. When you consider your total life-span, there is only a very short period of time that you can work with them at home on making this difference. Coaching your child using the guidelines in this manual, while it involves time and energy, will soon give you a feeling of deep pleasure and satisfaction as you see your child gain in confidence and understanding.

PART ONE

Goal-setting - aiming at the right target

Creating clear long-term goals

What you want to achieve with your child can motivate, excite and empower you to go beyond what you first believed your child could do. If you cannot picture the target you want to achieve, you may miss it, just like archers who shoot arrows at a target they can't see. Steven Covey's book '*The seven habits of highly effective people*' (1989), is a valuable resource to further inspire you to develop goal setting and time management skills for yourself and your family.

Creating a bigger picture about your child's potential future helps you and them stay focussed day-to-day on working to achieve their ambitions. Take time and thought to write down what you believe your child can learn this year, and how they can develop as people. You can talk with your child's teacher about what they think your child needs to achieve as well. Teachers are often thinking about how to develop a wide range of skills in children – not just learning skills.

It is a good idea to display these goals somewhere you can look at them regularly and change them as you achieve them. Keep goals realistic, but still aim high. Include your child as much as possible. Your vision of what skills you want to develop in your child will change over time. Creating your goals together with your child is more effective than if you do it without them, however, you might like to try setting goals for them on your own at first.

Useful goals are:

- Very clearly described and believable
- Ambitious, exciting and important
- For the whole child – intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual.

Aim high for your children so they can aim high too.

The coaching session

How to work in partnership with your child so they learn

Working within clear roles helps you both work well together. The coach's and student's role has to be carefully described – both for you and your child to understand how you can best work together.

- Your child will learn from you by following your instructions and doing the agreed-upon work. They should be in control of the lesson to some extent, for example, they should be offered choices such as when they might need a break or which subject they want to begin with.
- You are the coach who is more expert than the child on the skills they want to learn and how they can be learnt best.

Think about ways that you and your child can **assume the roles** of coach and student.

For example you could always:

- Work in a particular place
- Wear a particular item of clothing such as a hat or jacket
- Be called 'coach' and call your child 'student'.

When coaching your child remember that negotiation as two equal people, whatever your ages, is vital here for a good working relationship. You are also both learning to work with each other in a different way. The role of coach and student is often very different from the role you have as parent or caregiver and child.

Your respectful, positive attitude towards your child is the most valuable tool you have – use it wisely.

Find their learning edge. Children cannot learn an idea or skill if you begin at a level that is too difficult for them. Assuming that the child already has knowledge and skills you might believe are quite easy, is a very common error among coaches. Sometimes you may have to go back, then back further, to find out exactly where a child stopped understanding a topic or skill. For example,

- You cannot teach tables to a child if they cannot add and take away numbers accurately and quickly
- You cannot coach a child on finding the fraction of a whole number if they cannot divide numbers easily
- You cannot expect a child to read simple words if they cannot yet remember their consonant and vowel sounds (consonants are all the letters except the vowels. The vowels are **A E I O U** and sometimes **Y**).

Explore their skills until you know you have found where their learning edge is, or the line dividing what they know from what they don't quite understand and remember, and then coach them from there. Talk with your child's classroom teacher about their skill levels as well. They should be able to give you a more thorough understanding of where your child's learning edge is and how to help them.

Spend as much time as you and your child need on those skills they don't quite remember and/or understand, before moving on to more difficult skills.

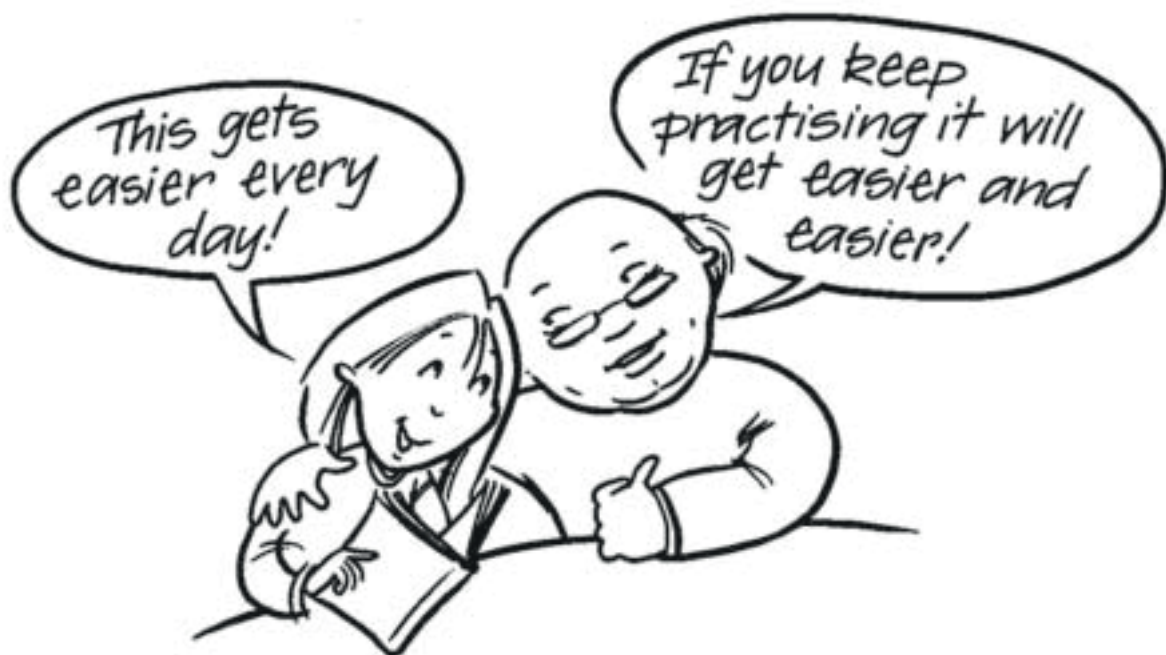
Many children have learnt a great deal by heart without deeply understanding it. Never be shocked or saddened when you find gaps in their knowledge. Be pleased. Now you know exactly how and where to help them. Always show them that you are very happy that you now know where you need to start working with them.

Don't take the basic skills for granted!

Revision is also a very important ingredient in coaching a child. First check up on the last session's coaching, and then move on to coaching the next idea or skill. A coaching session can consist of checking and re-teaching, checking and re-teaching, checking and re-teaching. Half the session can be revision, even the whole lesson sometimes. Your child may 'forget' much of what you teach them at first. That can be because:

- You have not quite found the right way of explaining an idea or skill, or
- The child assumes they can't remember it so doesn't, or
- Another more basic skill or idea needs to be taught before they can understand the present one.

Often prompting them is enough to find a memory, but sometimes you must teach the idea all over again and again and again. Believe that if they do not understand, it is because you have not taught an idea or skill well yet. Explain this to your child.



Revise, revise, revise!

Important attitudes

Develop intelligence, effort, and deal with frustration

Research has shown that a person's intelligence is not set at birth and can grow as they develop skills and knowledge (Alderman, 1999; Bandura, 1997; Stipek, 1998). However, your child might not believe this about themselves and you as their coach might need to help them realise that **they can grow their own intelligence**.

This requires patience and respect as you re-teach and re-teach ideas and skills you might see as quite simple ones to learn. Stop any of your judgemental thoughts such as:

"They should know this by now."

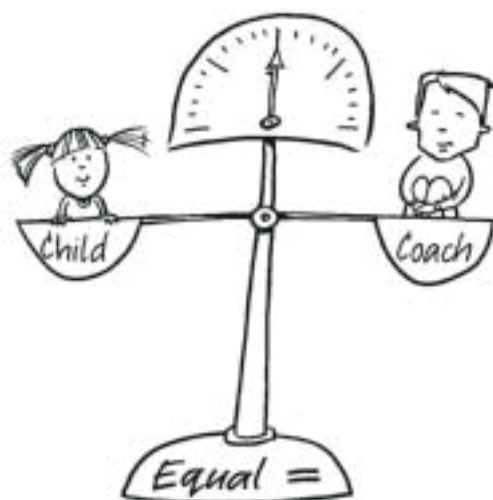
"Why haven't they got this yet?"

Do not let their seeming helplessness, their off task behaviours, their actions and words, fool you into thinking for one moment that they are 'slow' or can't concentrate, or not able to learn maths or reading. It is very important you believe in their intelligence, and regularly show total trust in the coaching process and in their ability to learn; then their confidence in their own intelligence will grow. Sometimes because of some of the ways they behave at first you may have to bluff yourself and them.

However, if **you consistently believe they are highly intelligent people** they may surprise themselves and you by beginning to learn more rapidly and by remembering new information more easily.

The less intelligently your child may act, the more you treat them as a very intelligent person.

child has said no to you about changing some part of their writing, then mutual trust and respect will grow between you. The child will then begin to write more freely and with much more satisfaction. Their writing will also have a depth and richness you did not expect of them, and they will begin to write more. It is very important to keep to your role as editor, so that the writer keeps control of their story.



The writing process

1. You might have to help them **decide what they want to write**. At first you both might have to spend most of the tuition time brainstorming ideas. Flow charts and mind-maps as well as lists are useful ways to get ideas down onto paper. If your child is not at all keen to write, you can write these ideas down as they tell you. The time spent thinking up ideas and then ordering these ideas is valuable and often underestimated. Adult writers often spend a lot of time thinking before they write.

A simple way of doing this is to have a piece of paper folded width-ways into three parts which you head up with '**Beginning, Middle, and End**', then ask them to write down very briefly what happens.

- Under the **Beginning** you can ask them to describe where and when the story takes place and who is in it.
- The main action happens in the **Middle** so "*What happens next?*" is a good question to ask.
- **Ending** can be difficult if not thought through, and a satisfying ending is very important when you are telling a story. "*How can we end it?*" and "*What will happen at the end?*" are useful questions to ask.

PART TWO

Positive Strategies vs Negative Strategies

Suggestions for working with your child when there are difficulties

Part two of this manual is for when you and your child are having trouble working well together. The behaviours described in this manual are the most common behaviours used by children to avoid studying. Your child might use more than one of them. For example, they might try to regularly 'put off' the coaching until later, and also be easily distracted when you are working with them or they are working on their own.

Strategies for you as their coach are included so you can help your child change these behaviours which stop them from learning. Using some of these strategies or ideas might help both of you work together even more harmoniously and respectfully and easily.

- You can use more than one of these ideas at a time.
- None of these ideas are punishments.
- Some of them you can do without your child noticing; ignoring the dropped pencil for example.
- Other strategies need to be talked through with your child and then you can decide together what strategies will help the unhelpful behaviours disappear, and helpful study behaviours develop.
- All of them are positive ways of helping your child learn to study. Keep your voice quiet and stay very calm and businesslike.
- Keep remembering that your aim is to help your child develop better work habits.

? Worried that your child is underachieving at school?
Has your child started to lose confidence that they can learn?
Is your child unhappy?

As an educational coach, Anne (M.Ed.) shares simple and effective strategies that are based both on her own experience, and current revolutionary research on learning and remembering.

'Coaching your children to be excellent students: A practical guide' translates the research into strategies you can utilise to help your child become a confident and successful student.

A parent who initially worked with her eldest son said:

"I now know what to do with my two youngest, and if I didn't have Anne's coaching guide I wouldn't know where to start. It is an awesome tool and I am much more confident coaching my children."

(Sally, son 6 years, daughter 8 years)

Another parent said:

"The information in the coaching guide is great and it has been a fantastic help. What worked for me was setting regular and longer times to coach, chunking the time we work, developing patience and respect, and learning how to coach writing." *(Mandy, son 10 years)*

This practical guide provides step-by-step instructions on how to develop a successful coaching relationship with your child. It includes advice on how to create a learning environment, set clear agreements with your child, coach important reading, writing, and mathematics skills, and it also helps you resolve difficulties you may have while coaching. Discover powerful strategies to change your child from a "No, I won't" person, to a "Yes, please teach me more" person.



Anne Marsh (M.Ed.) is the Director of The Student Tuition Centre. Anne has been practising as a professional educational coach for the last 15 years. Her specialist focus is coaching parents how to develop their child's learning potential. **'Coaching your children to be excellent students:**

A practical guide' is the result of the many requests received from parents wanting advice on how they could help their own child succeed at school.

Her website www.ExcellYourChild.com gives you ongoing support and information on how to help your child.

Learn how to be your child's educational coach today!