

Planning and deadlines

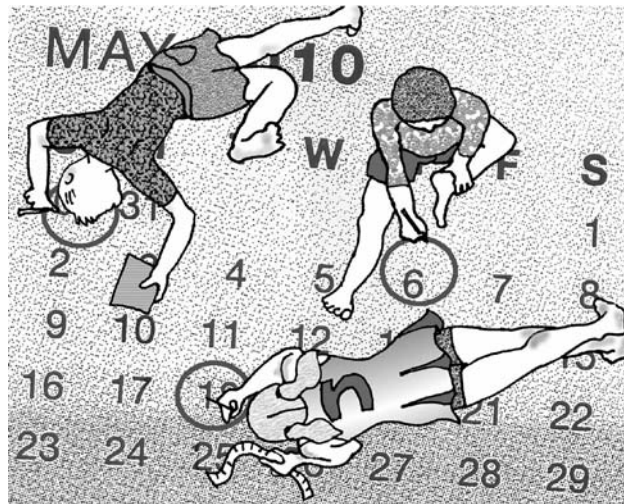
Planning is a great motivator for many kids and helps overcome many of the fears kids have. When kids learn to plan their time, their actions, their budget, their social life and their activities, they get a sense of control instead of feeling overpowered by external sources.

Planning is another form of chunking down. It is supposed to ease the feeling of being overwhelmed. Many kids want to do or have things but have no idea how to get them. They do not even know the right questions to ask.

Simple things, like preparing for a test, something most kids experience over and over again during their school years, present time management and technical challenges to the kids. Being unable to plan their homework makes it seem hard and may discourage them from even starting.

Using a calendar

Encourage your kids to use a calendar. When they are young, buy them a themed calendar that they like and teach them to use it every day. Here are some things kids can write in their calendars that will teach them planning.



For the calendar kids, planning became second nature.

1. **Homework** - tell your kids to write homework due dates, but teach them the importance of finishing their homework as soon as possible, when information is still fresh in their mind.
2. **Assignments** - tell your kids to write assignment due dates and plan backwards from them. Help them estimate how long it will take them to complete each assignment and teach them to always have a "time buffer", just in case they need some more time. I set "Ronit's due date" for assignments to a week before the official due date. This has saved me many times from not finishing assignments.
3. **Special events** (birthdays, parties, trips, family gatherings) - the kids can paste or staple invitations and permission slips to the right date and always be ready on time.
4. **To do list** (bring jumping rope to school, return library book)
5. **Time table for hobbies** (basketball practice 3:30-4:30 on Mondays, music lesson 6:00-6:30 on Wednesdays)
6. **Fun ideas for spare time** (weekends are usually blank, so the kids can use them for general lists)
7. **Phone numbers of friends** - organized kids have names of friends with their phone numbers and preferably their parents' names and address. This is very useful when they plan a get together or some play time. It is also a good idea to have emergency numbers in the calendar.
8. **Library days** and due dates of library books

Tips

The most important thing about using a calendar is not having it but using it. If kids have a great calendar but never use it, it has no value. Every day, make sure you help your kids use their calendar. Go over their day and teach them to write down all the things they can think of and

clear some space in their mind. Every day, make sure they look at the following day, week and month and plan what they need.

The calendar can double up as a monitoring and confidence boosting tool by checking completed assignments and even writing down impressions and lessons learned, which kids can look at again to remember.

Keep doing this until you are confident your kids will use their calendar without your help.

Deadlines

Deadline motivation can be a carrot or a stick depending on the style of the child. Some kids are last-minute kids - they are motivated to do things and get to their peak state when they have a tight deadline to meet. It excites and energizes them. Others dread deadline and feel strangled by having a point in time by which they need to produce or do something.

If your child is a last-minute kid, although this is perceived a negative thing, it may bring out the best in them and yield the best outcome. So if your kids study for exams only the night before and get an A - let them. If they do the project the day before its due date and get an A - let them.

For kids who perform badly under tight schedules, deadlines are a source of pressure. Encourage your kids to set their own deadline, as I explained above. When kids set their own deadlines, they have a better feeling about controlling their time and they can take into consideration their other activities.

Family calendar

Use a family calendar to be a role model and encourage family planning. A simple contact paper (sticky transparency) attached to your refrigerator or a centrally located door and some whiteboard markers will do the trick. Write down anything the family needs to take into consideration when planning something new.

Encourage your kids to add their activities in the family calendar to give them a sense of belonging and to show their input is valued.

Encourage your kids to ask "who, what, when and where". Once they get into the habit of asking these questions, they will be able to plan ahead better, because each question covers a different angle. For example, if they need to go to music lesson, they would ask "Who will take me there?" or "How will I get there?", "What do I need to take with me?", "When does it start?", "When should I practice?" and "Where are my notes?"

Summary

1. Planning is a motivation technique that helps your kids deal with their fear of the unknown
2. Use a calendar to teach planning
3. Use a family calendar to encourage collaboration and consideration between family members
4. Deadlines can be a stick or a carrot, depending on your kid's personal style
5. Deadlines are only effective as self motivators
6. Use the what, where, when, who and how question to practice planning ahead
7. Give your kids lots of practice time

Source: Ronit Baras
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