

10 questions that can change children's attitude to learning

- **Say to your child the word “yet” as often as you can.** For example, when your child says “I can't do fractions” you say “you can't do fractions yet”. Help them to see the possibility that they will be able to achieve it in the future.
- **Say to your child “You're getting better”** whenever the opportunity allows. Learning is all about improvement and learning a skill needs patience and practice to improve. Your child needs lots of support along the way.
- **Say to your child “What have you learned today?”** This question is a lot more specific than “What did you do today?”
- **Say encouraging things as often as you can when your child is beginning to learn something new, and encourage them when something still is not perfect.** Remember how much encouragement you gave your child when they took their first wobbly steps? Children of all ages need that same encouragement whenever they start learning something new. Learning is always harder at the beginning.
- **Say things to your child to show you can see that there is improvement, however small. Compare “then” and “now” and praise the difference.** Learning is about getting better; lots of “getting better” steps.
- **Say to your child “Of course you've made a mistake, but keep going, you're learning.”** Every child needs to know that making mistakes is all part of the learning process. Mistakes can be good because you can learn from them. You never really learn something well if you don't make mistakes along the way.
- **Say to your child “Your brain is wired in lots of different ways, some ways are better than others. Let's try to make each part work as well as it can.”** Few of us will be brilliant at everything but we can get better at everything.
- **Say to your child “Take a break, do some exercise, then start learning again.”** The brain needs blood, oxygen and rest to keep going.
- **Say to your child “If you find facts difficult to remember then it is OK to use a “hook” to help you to remember.”** There are just too many facts to remember so your child should only worry about remembering the ones that really matter. For those, it is fine to give their brain some help if they need to. For example, the rhyme Richard Of York Goes By In Violet spells out all the colours of the rainbow; anything to trigger the brain to remember is good.
- **Say to your child “I found x easy to learn, but I had to work harder at y.”** Make sure your child knows you went through similar learning struggles as they are going through. Show your child realistic models of learning; do not fake your own excellence. On the other hand do not promote inabilities either—unless you are promoting how much better you could have been if only you had kept trying.