

What is Planning?

Strategies and techniques for improving your child's Planning Skills.

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What Planning is all about, and how to tell if your child needs to improve it.

Page 2



Improving Planning

Tips and Strategies for Improving your child's Planning Skills

Page 4



Planning and Academics

Why strong Planning Skills are vital to a child's academic success.

Page 6



Planning and Digital Play

How healthy and responsible digital play can help improve Planning Skills

Page 8

What is Planning?

Kids With Good Planning Skills:

1. Combine school and social activities without getting overwhelmed by stress.
2. Tend to be good at scheduling activities.
3. Can anticipate the tools necessary to successfully complete a task.
4. Prioritize their activities effectively.



Planning is the thinking skill that helps an individual develop strategies to accomplish goals. It helps a child to think about how to complete a task before attempting to begin it. For example, Planning is utilized when a child sets out to complete an art project by first deciding what art supplies they will need, carefully assembling and arranging these supplies, and then taking a step-by-step process for completing the project.

Planning is an important part of your child's academic advancement, as it is the key thinking skill in allowing them to set strategies, prioritize actions, and accomplish goals. Planning skills are needed for social activities such as extending invitations to friends for a play date and for school-related tasks such as writing an essay, conducting research, and presenting a final project.

Planning is the most frequently cited skill described in the many theories of executive functioning. The use of planning and foresight is necessary for goal-directed behavior, the accomplishment of which underlies theories of executive functioning. It is a core component of Dawson and Guare's theory of executive

functions, after which we have patterned our thinking skills at LearningWorks for Kids.

As an executive function, planning may best be observed in seeing how effective individuals are in setting and completing goals. It also includes how realistic their goal setting is, and the capacity to display foresight into potential impediments to achieving their goals. In addition, planning requires a systematic approach and the sequencing of steps to achieve a goal. Planning helps kids figure out how to complete their homework, get ready for school in the morning, and arrange for methods of getting together with their friends.

Assessing the executive function of planning in children involves determining how prepared they

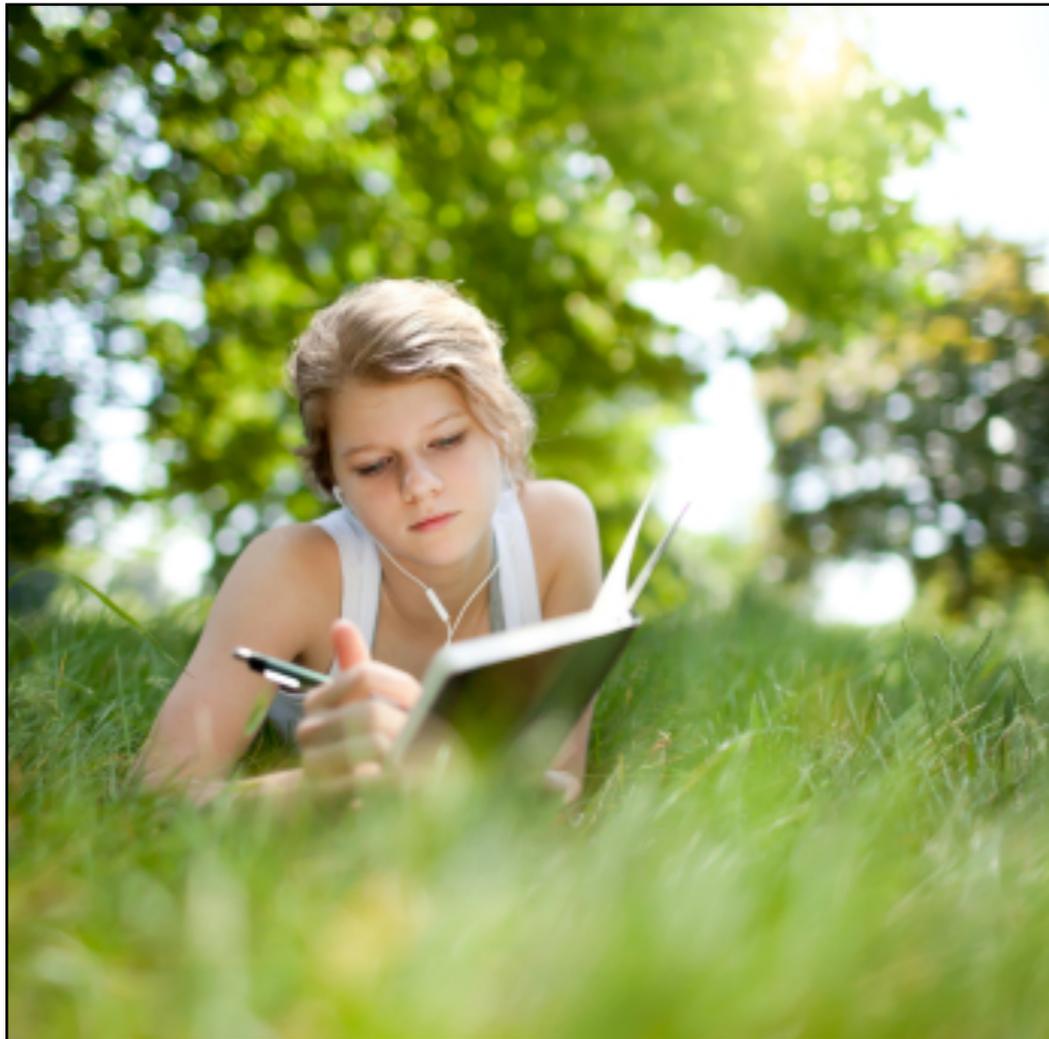
are for starting tasks or activities and how they go about setting goals for themselves. The LearningWorks for Kids Thinking Skills Assessment is based on the Executive Skills Questionnaire, which measures planning

Kids With Underdeveloped Planning Skills:

1. Encounter problems in step-by-step processes.
2. Experience difficulties in setting priorities and goals.
3. Tend to complete their homework at the last minute.
4. Tend to jump into activities without reading the directions.
5. Can be overly absorbed in the present moment.

primarily by how effective and efficient an individual is in completing tasks. This scale focuses on tasks such as preparedness, setting priorities and goals, and following step-by-step directions,. Planning is differentiated from organizational skills in that planning focuses on how one sequences and organizes activities, rather than possessions.

Improving Planning



These are some general strategies and ideas for helping kids to improve their Planning skills.

1. Create a master calendar of events to help your child plan ahead. Your child can personalize this calendar with pictures, graphics, stickers, or doodles, and should include important events, meetings, games, and deadlines.
2. Create checklists with your child of items needed for various activities and events. For example, a checklist for baseball practice might include a bat bag, baseball bat, glove, hat, cleats, and water bottle. These lists can be posted in their room or where the equipment for a given activity is kept.
3. Have your child plan a day trip or

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outing, and assist them in identifying what will be needed for the event. For example, if your child wants to go to the zoo, you could advise them to print out a zoo map from the computer, and prioritize the exhibits that they would like to see when they get there.

4. Make homework a part of your family's regular routine by establishing a consistent schedule. If necessary, divide homework time into two blocks (one after school, one after dinner), and have your child identify what they hope to complete during each block.
5. Encourage brainstorming as a tool in the planning process. Sometimes the best way to come up with a plan is to explore alternatives. Teaching and practicing brainstorming strategies can be very useful for a child who struggles with the Planning thinking skill. It's important to recognize that brainstorming will likely be the first phase of planning. Teach your child the three steps of effective brainstorming. First, generate as many ideas as possible about what is to be accomplished or achieved in a limited amount of time. Next, answer a series of questions by creating a

“web.” To create the web, use question prompts such as who, what, where, why, when, and how. Create a visual representation of the web on a piece of paper to show connections between your child's answers. Sometimes it can be helpful to utilize some of the original ideas from the first brainstorming step in the web. Finally, generate a list of additional ideas regarding the topic based on steps one and two. This brainstorming approach can help with written assignments, planning an activity, and recognizing the necessary steps to completing a task.



Flexibility and Academic Skills

Planning is an integral thinking skill for many of the sciences as well as literary subjects.

It is an important skill for completion of long-term academic projects. Planning becomes an increasingly crucial skill as students move into higher grades, as they must juggle multiple classes and exams together with a variety of short, and long-term projects.

Reading

- Planning helps kids understand what they need to read in order to learn about a particular subject.
- Reading directions prior to starting a task is an important planning activity.



- Planning helps kids to think ahead about they intend to write and how they will present the material.

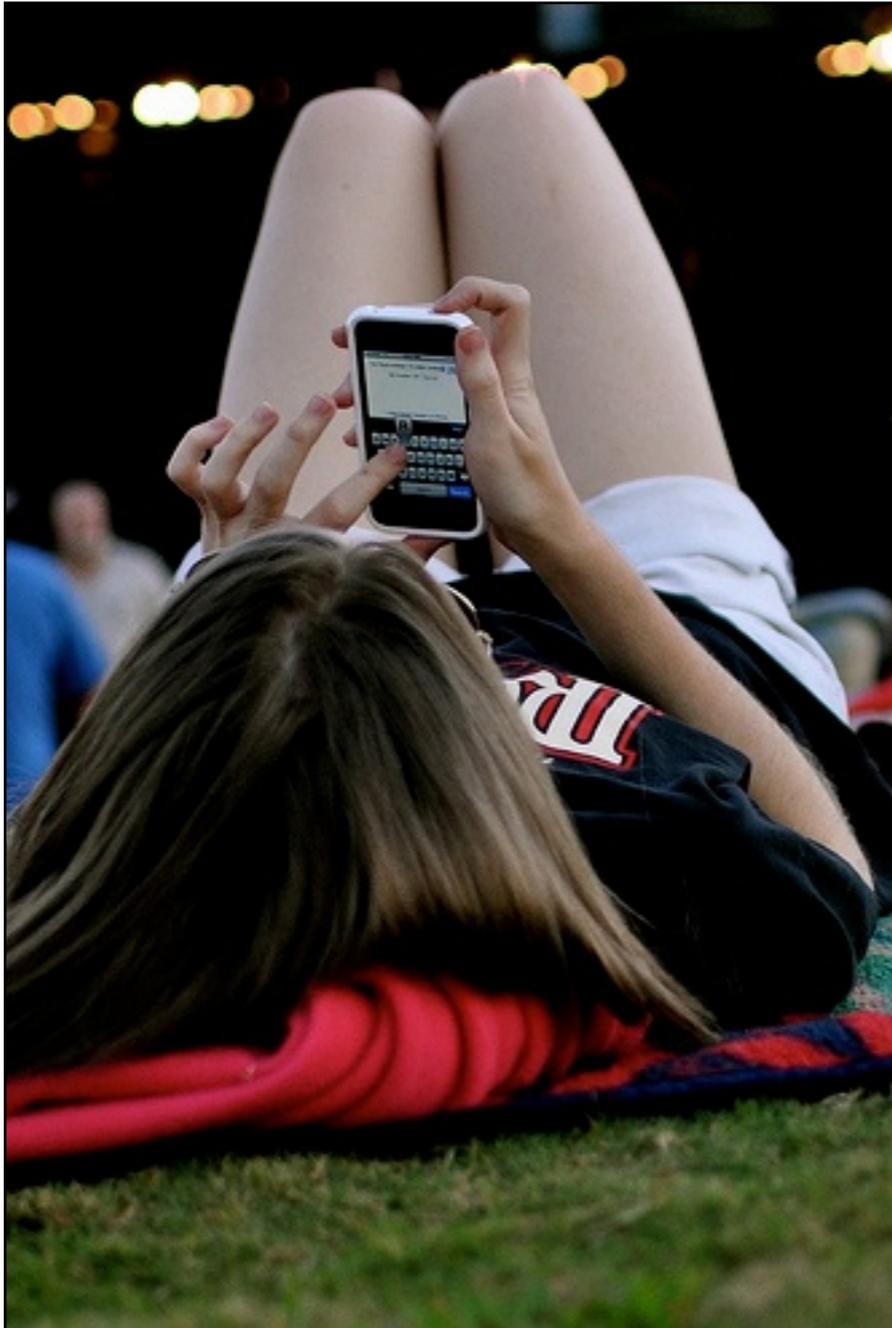
Math

- Planning skills help when thinking ahead about the type of problem that needs to be solved.
- Planning is helpful for determining the steps necessary to complete complex word problems.

Writing

- Planning skills are vital for pre-writing tasks such as brainstorming, outlining, and using graphic organizers.

Planning and Digital Play



Digital Play is filled with opportunities to improve Planning.

Playing video games, searching the Internet, trying out the newest app, or Facebooking a friend demands a variety of thinking skills. Proficiency with any of these digital tools requires the ability to apply skills such as Planning, Organization, Working Memory, or Self-Awareness. For children, the attraction of video games and technologies makes them an ideal teaching tool for practicing game-based skills and learning to apply them to school and daily activities.

Planning is the most identifiable thinking skill used in video games. When psychologists and educators talk about video games being a great opportunity for developing problem-solving, critical-thinking, and decision-making skills, they are often targeting

“Planning is the most identifiable thinking skill used in video games...”



the importance of Planning in games. Many of the best games require players to develop short, and long-term goals, anticipate the future, and use a step-by-step process for success.

Apps and interactive digital media have become the norm for assisting individuals in Planning. Whether it be a graphic organizer that helps plan a writing assignment, a calendar on one's cell phone, or a productivity program on one's computer, the day of the paper planner is quickly fading.

Digital play can help kids improve Flexibility skills by helping them to:

- Use foresight to anticipate what is going to happen next within a game allowing them to, for example, avoid bombs or predict enemy attacks.
- Shift between long-term and short-term goals within a game. For example, they can practice attacks on weaker enemies in order to strengthen a character prior to a big “boss” battle.
- Learn from mistakes and use what they have learned to make strategic changes.
- Use productivity tools that facilitate the reordering of priorities as tasks are accomplished.

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