

sa

# Homeschooling

WINTER 2024

*and beyond*

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**HOMESCHOOLING IN SA**

A four-step guide

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# Ask Dalena



Dalena van der Westhuizen will answer any questions or concerns you may have about learning, concentration, memory and cognitive development – and, of course, the frustrations arising from these

**W**hat are some important “don’ts” for dealing with my eight-year-old daughter with ADHD? – *Bianca du Toit*

Hi Bianca

**1. Don’t criticise or punish for symptoms:** Specifically, don’t punish behaviours that are part of her ADHD, like forgetfulness or fidgeting. Instead, focus on understanding them and working with her to manage them.

**2. Don’t overwhelm with too many instructions:** Giving too many instructions at once can be overwhelming. Break tasks into smaller, manageable steps and give one instruction at a time.

**3. Don’t neglect positive reinforcement:** Constantly pointing out mistakes can be discouraging. Be sure to recognise and praise her efforts and achievements, no matter how small.



**4. Don’t ignore her need for routine:** Children with ADHD often benefit from a structured routine. Avoid being too spontaneous with changes, as this can cause anxiety and confusion.



**5. Don’t isolate her:** Social interactions can be tough for kids with ADHD. Encourage positive social experiences and help her develop social skills.

**Is there technology you would recommend that can help my child in self-directed learning? – Linda Halgreen**

Hi Linda

Although I’m not a self-directed learning expert, there are several technologies that are highly recommended.

One is Khan Academy, a free online platform offering a wide range of subjects with

instructional videos and practice exercises that allow children to learn at their own pace and explore topics which interest them deeply.

Another is Duolingo for language learning. It's engaging and gamified, making the process of learning a new language (great for your brain!) fun and self-paced.

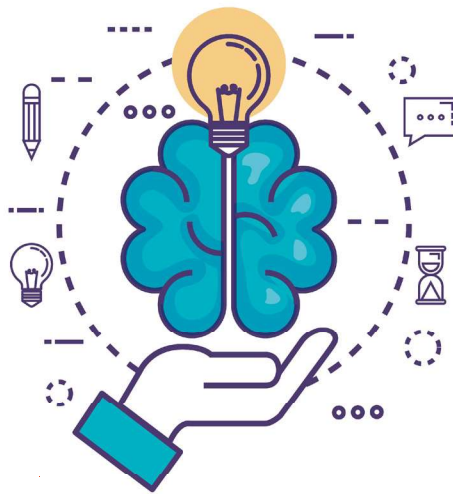
For more interactive learning, there's Scratch for introducing children to coding and creative problem-solving. It's a visual programming language that encourages children to create their own projects, developing both creativity and technical skills.

Also consider Google Classroom for organising learning materials and assignments.

### Is it true that vitamins B and C can help a child focus? – Sinette van Staden

There is some evidence suggesting that vitamins B and C can support better focus and concentration in children.

Supplements can be beneficial if a deficiency's present. However, if the underlying skills on which



the brain relies to pay attention and stay focused (cognitive skills) are weak, supplements merely act as “food for the brain”, while the actual problem persists. Truly addressing the problem requires pin-pointing which underlying skills are weak and need strengthening (cognitive development).

### Why does my 11-year old have such a hard time remembering things? – Tanya Leeson

Research has shown that 80% of struggles with reading, memory, attention and learning are typically caused by weak cognitive skills – the brain skills responsible for how we take in, process, store and, ultimately, recall information.

We all have different strengths and weaknesses within our cognitive profile. In other words, a child might have strong visual processing skills, but have a weak working memory. That's why even intelligent children may

sometimes struggle with certain tasks, like remembering.

It's possible to find the “why” behind your child's memory struggles. Start with a cognitive assessment from an organisation specialising in cognitive testing and development. The information will provide you with insights into your child's specific cognitive profile and guide you in how best to support them.

#### About Dalena

Dalena van der Westhuizen is the co-founder and MD of BrainAbility, a cognitive development specialist, a master brain coach and an internationally certified cognitive coach. She translates the latest international cognitive research and best practice into strategies that can be applied by parents and educators alike.

A mom and a self-confessed chocoholic, Dalena enjoys working with both kids and adults to improve the way their brains process information for better learning, reading and focusing.

Send your questions  
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