

INSIGHTS

Establishing a personal learning centre at home



With many students learning remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic a suitable home workspace becomes a significant issue. Meal tables, breakfast benches, even couches are now being turned into place of learning. Many parents report that their children have difficulties concentrating for significant periods and are easily distracted by digital games and videos. These concentration issues may be due to your child's choice of workspace rather than with lesson difficulty or mode of learning.

Location carries memory

If you've ever established a dedicated children's play space in your home then you'll know how powerful location can be for shaping attitudes and behaviour. Your children will have learned to associate play with those designated areas – as location consistently carries memory of use. The same principle applies with school work. If your child is working in the same place that they normally eat a meal then it's more than likely they will associate that place with pleasurable family activities rather than learning.

Establish a personal learning centre at home

The same principle applies with a child's learning or work space. At Parenting Ideas, we recommend that you establish a personal learning centre at home so that your child will begin to associate learning with that designated space. The concept of a personal learning centre is central to the notion of establishing a lifelong learning mindset in your child or young person.

Features of a personal learning centre

A personal learning centre can be established anywhere in a house or apartment, including in a child's bedroom or any quiet space. (Check with your child's school to find out if a bedroom is recommended.) It has some or all of the following features:

- Comfortable place for reading – bean bag, couch or chair
- A bookshelf with a variety of fiction and non-fiction books
- A digital screen (portable or fixed) for research
- Materials for writing, recording and note taking
- Digital device equipped with age-appropriate apps and programs that enable learning, research and content creation
- A place for a water bottle or jug of water
- Table or desk and suitable lighting

What's in a name?

A quick glance at the list above may have you thinking that a personal learning centre is basically a desk with a few fancy gadgets attached. On one level this is correct however there are three advantages a personal learning centre has over a simple work space or desk.

First, the name says it all. A personal learning centre is a place children can go to learn, not necessarily to work.

Second, the nature of a personal learning centre implies that it's something to build upon rather than a finite entity. You can start a personal learning centre very simply by establishing a bookshelf and some comfortable chairs, and build from there.

Third, a personal learning centre is a concept that your child can take into adulthood that's easily adapted to suit any situation. When I travel, my personal learning centre consists of a phone, a book and any comfortable couch or chair I can find. It's the idea rather than the furniture and physical setting where the learning magic lays.

The changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic offer a great opportunity to try new ideas. The establishment of a personal learning centre is an idea worth trying as it will help establish in your child or young person's mind that learning is a lifelong journey rather than something that happens during the school years.



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Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's an award-winning speaker and the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation*, and the bestselling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. Michael is a former teacher with 15 years experience, and has 30 years experience in parenting education. He also holds a Master of Educational Studies from Monash University specialising in parenting education.