

# Six Ways To Motivate Students To Learn

- [Teaching Strategies](#)



Scientific research has provided us with a number of ways to get the learning juices flowing, none of which involve paying money for good grades. And most smart teachers know this, even without scientific proof.

- 1. Fine-tune the challenge.** We're most motivated to learn when the task before us is matched to our level of skill: not so easy as to be boring, and not so hard as to be frustrating. Deliberately fashion the learning exercise so that students are working at the very edge of your abilities, and keep upping the difficulty as they improve.
- 2. Start with the question, not the answer.** Memorizing information is boring. Discovering the solution to a puzzle is invigorating. Present material to be learned not as a *fait accompli*, but as a live question begging to be explored.
- 3. Encourage students to beat their personal best.** Some learning tasks, like memorizing the multiplication table or a list of names or facts, are simply not interesting in themselves. Generate motivation by encouraging students to compete against themselves: run through the material once to establish a baseline, then keep track of how much they improve (in speed, in accuracy) each time.
- 4. Connect abstract learning to concrete situations.** Adopt the case-study method that has proven so effective for business, medical and law school students: apply abstract theories and concepts to a real-world scenario, using these formulations to analyze and make sense of situations involving real people and real stakes.

**5. Make it social.** Put together a learning group, or have students find learning partners with whom they can share their moments of discovery and points of confusion. Divide the learning task into parts, and take turns being teacher and pupil. The simple act of explaining what they're learning out loud will help them understand and remember it better.

**6. Go deep.** Almost any subject is interesting once you get inside it. Assign the task of becoming the world's expert on one small aspect of the material they have to learn—then extend their new expertise outward by exploring how the piece they know so well connects to all the other pieces they need to know about.

For more about the science of learning, go to [AnnieMurphyPaul.com](http://AnnieMurphyPaul.com)

Previous Article « [Nielsen Survey: How Students Prefer To Use Tablets In Schools](#)

Next Article

[Is School Enough? Documentary Film Delves In](#) »