

How to Be Smart: Successive

When we say people are smart, we usually mean they know a lot of information. But being smart also means that someone has a lot of ability to learn new things. Being smart at learning new things includes knowing and using your *thinking abilities*. There are ways you can use your abilities *better* when you are learning.

What Does Being Smart Mean?

Successive ability is what you use to put *information in order*. It is what you use when you have to remember the *sequence* of information, such as a telephone number. When you tie your shoe you have to do all the steps in the right *order*. When you are sounding out a word you haven't seen before, you are using your Successive ability to say the sounds in the correct *order*. When you repeat a word you have never heard before, especially if it is in a different language, you are using Successive ability. This ability also helps you put sounds together to say words, and words together to make sentences. Sequential ability is very important for reading, math, and all of your subjects.

How Can You Be Smarter?

You can be smarter if you pay attention to the sequences in which things must be done. There are ways of making the sequence easier to remember. For example, group letters when spelling words. Find out if writing the words 10 times each helps you. Do flashcards work better for you? It is smart to find out how you learn sequences best and then to use what works best for you. Thinking about the sequences of things is a good way to be smarter about your work!

**Think smart
and follow the
sequence!**



Figure 1. Picture for remembering to follow the sequence.

Remembering to Follow the Sequence

Remember that sometimes when you are anxious, tired, or just doing too many things at one time, you might forget to look at the order in which information is presented. When you see that you are not using your Successive ability, say to yourself, "Think smart and follow the sequence!" (see Figure 1). Looking closely at the sequences of things will make you smarter!

Resources

- Goldstein, S., & Naglieri, J.A. (2007, October 22–27). Planning and attention problems in ADHD: What parents and teachers can do. *Attention*.
- Naglieri, J.A., Goldstein, S., & Conway, C. (2009). Using the Planning, Attention, Simultaneous, Successive (PASS) theory within a neuropsychological context. In C. Reynolds & E. Fletcher-Janzen (Eds.), *Handbook of clinical child neuropsychology (3rd ed.)*. (pp. 783–800). New York: Springer.
- Pressley, M.P., & Woloshyn, V. (1995). *Cognitive strategy instruction that really improves children's academic performance* (2nd ed.). Brookline, MA: Brookline Books.
- Scheid, K. (1993). *Helping students become strategic learners*. Brookline, MA: Brookline Books.