



MEDIA BAKERY

# Home office for homework

## Expert tips to support good study habits

By Star Lawrence

IS YOUR TEEN “studying” while lying across the bed, tapping on a computer, yakking on the phone or texting, mouthing along with music—with papers sliding everywhere?

Such study “habits” can be improved, according to Bobbi DePorter, president of the Quantum Learning Network and co-founder of SuperCamp ([www.SuperCamp.com](http://www.SuperCamp.com)), which offers seven- to 10-day residential learning and life-skills programs each summer. The Quantum Learning School program ([www.QuantumLearning.com](http://www.QuantumLearning.com)) is an offshoot that so far has trained thousands of educators to institute similar learning techniques during the school year.

“School is kids’ work,” DePorter says. “But when adults have work, often they have home offices. These work for kids, too.”

DePorter, author of six books, including *The Seven Biggest Teen Problems and How to Turn Them into Strengths* (Learning Forum Publications, 2006), says setting out to design and equip a teen office sends the message that school—and study—is important. “We want to create lifelong learners. Learning is a discovery process, not just facts, but also the ability to make connections and analyze. An office makes it serious business,” she adds.

Often parents want to keep the kids in view during homework hour. But DePorter suggests the teen office be away from distractions. “People need to focus on one thing at a time,” she says. This means the office can be in the child’s room or another non-public area of the house.

### Creating the study environment

Think about your child and his or her learning style. Is your child a reader? Or does the youngster prefer visual cues?

DePorter has two grandchildren with different styles. Her grandson is very active and cannot sit long in a straight chair at a desk. His office has a bucket seat he can sprawl in. His desk comes to him—on rollers. It has a well for pens and pencils to keep them corralled and a ledge to keep items from falling off. He also has a floor lamp instead of a desk lamp.

Her granddaughter is more visual and prefers bulletin boards, with all her lessons on the wall and updated. She also has a more conventional desk chair.

All kids should have a large paper calendar on the wall with important due dates of projects and upcoming events. Encourage the child to think about how long each will take and note that.

Music can inspire learning—music with no words, that is. DePorter suggests “brain-friendly” background sounds such as Baroque music—Bach, Handel, Pachelbel, Vivaldi. “This simulates the rhythm of the heart,” she explains, “helping you be both relaxed and alert.”

DePorter says teens need to prepare the subconscious mind for learning. She recommends putting affirmations on the wall, ideas such as “I BELIEVE IN MYSELF,” “EVERYTHING I DO DESERVES MY BEST EFFORT,” “I CAN LEARN THIS!” The youngster can make these on the computer.

Provide the bins, shelves, cubbies and drawers necessary to keep the space picked up and restful. Clutter can lead to scattered thinking.

### Study guidelines

Besides allowing the teen to select colors and equipment and co-design the “business-of-learning” space, DePorter suggests parents set a time for homework and then not nag to get the child started on it. “Some kids need time after school for sports or a break,” she says. “Every child is different.

“Parents,” DePorter says, “need to commend for effort, not just a grade or mark. Listen more, talk less.” She recommends engaging the child in conversation about school while in the car. This practice can warn of problems or difficulties in school that can be headed off before they become too serious.

As a last resort, of course, you can always say, “Go to your office!” This will seldom be necessary, however, because your teen will be organized, thoughtful and creative, and have a Handel on Bach. 🎵

*Star Lawrence is a freelance journalist in Chandler, Arizona.*

### The Costco Connection

Costco warehouses carry many things you need to get your home—and kids—ready for going back to school, including furnishings for your student’s “office,” food for snacks and lunches, storage bins, clothing and school supplies such as paper, pens and backpacks.