

What Is Self-Regulation? (Elementary)

Have you ever wanted to learn something new? Have you ever wanted to get better at something? Maybe you wanted to learn to play the guitar or improve your reading, but you just weren't sure how to get started. When you want to learn something new or improve your ability to do something, self-regulation will help.

Self-regulation is breaking up a goal into a set of steps that you plan in advance. Doing this can help you learn skills, manage emotional reactions, and accomplish tasks.

Learning self-regulation strategies will help you do better in school, take steps to learn new things on your own, and avoid distractions that can get in the way of your learning.

To better self-regulate, I use strategies like ***imagine the path to my success, break it down, manage big feelings, track my effort, and notice my progress***. These strategies will help me complete challenging tasks, make progress toward my goals, and improve my ability to do anything. Self-regulation strategies will help you too!

Imagine the Path to My Success (Elementary)

When you have a task to complete or something you want to learn, use the strategy ***imagine the path to my success***. When you imagine, you create pictures in your mind. Remember that what you tell yourself, think about, and imagine affects your ability to actually do something. To ***imagine the path to your success***, think about what it will look like, feel like, and sound like both as you make progress and when you succeed.

I used the strategy ***imagine the path to my success*** when I needed to get better at swimming. I wanted to be able to jump off the diving board, but to do that, I had to show the lifeguard that I could swim across the whole pool. I started by imagining myself practicing in the shallow end, using a kickboard to get faster and then working on my strokes. I imagined my friend giving me advice, and then using the advice to get better. I imagined swimming through the water and getting closer to the deep end of the pool.

I imagined myself feeling strong and confident as I swam through the water. I even imagined swimming all the way across the pool and the lifeguard saying, "Good job! You did it!" Using the strategy ***imagine the path to my success*** helped me to get started and keep trying when I experienced challenges.

The next time you want to learn something new or get better at something, start by ***imagining the path to your success*** and think about what it will look like, feel like, and sound like as you're making progress.

Break It Down (Elementary)

Have you ever felt excited about learning something new but didn't know how to begin? Can you think of a time when you had a lot of schoolwork to complete and felt like giving up because you just didn't know how to get started? When you have something challenging to learn or a task you need to complete, use the strategy **break it down** to help you get started!

When you **break it down**, you think about small actions to make progress toward your goal. For example, maybe you want to create a new video game. If you think of it as one task, it will probably feel too big. If you **break it down** into smaller steps, though, it will become much easier.

Every year, my school has a pizza party for students who read at home and keep a reading log. Last year, I often forgot to read or turn in my reading log, so I couldn't go to the pizza party. This year, I knew I needed to self-regulate better.

To **break it down**, I started by asking myself, "What do I need to do?" I needed to read and add to my reading log every night. Then I asked myself, "When do I need to finish?" I needed to turn in my reading log at the end of each week. Next, I asked myself, "What do I need to do to get started?" I decided to read each day for 10 minutes before playing video games. Then I asked myself, "What is the next thing I need to do?" I knew I needed to do something that would keep me from losing my reading log. I decided to keep it on the fridge. I would add to my reading log every night after dinner. I also decided to make myself a reminder note that said, "Reading log due Friday," which I taped to the door so I would see it before leaving for school.

I used the strategy **break it down** to help me get better at reading each night and turning in my reading log. At the end of the year, I got to go to the pizza party. The next time you're having trouble getting started, ask yourself:

- What do I need to do?
- When do I need to finish?
- What do I need to do to get started?
- What is the next thing I need to do?

Manage Big Feelings (Elementary)

Do you ever have a hard time concentrating because you are tired or because you keep thinking about other things? Do you get nervous when you have to read aloud or sing in front of others? Do you sometimes feel frustrated when learning something new?

We have all experienced big feelings. Sometimes your body and mind can go too fast, like when it is hard to concentrate or you need to catch your breath. You might feel like yelling or kicking something. Sometimes big feelings can make your body and mind go slow, like when you don't have much energy. You might want to go to sleep. When you need to learn or do something and your mind and body feel too fast or too slow, you can **manage big feelings**.

Imagine that you're a car. If you're going too slow, it will take forever to get to where you're going. If you're going too fast, you might get out of control and wreck. We want to go at just the right speed so we can focus and learn. When we keep our bodies and minds at just the right speed, we are **managing big feelings**.

If your body or mind is going too fast, you can take a few deep breaths and say positive things to yourself, like "You can do this. Just focus!" If your body or mind is going too slow, you might need to do some jumping jacks or take a walk to get more energy. Sometimes when we have feelings like sadness or hurt, it's best to talk to an adult.

When I go to gymnastic competitions, sometimes my body and mind go too fast. I get really nervous. I lose my confidence. My heart starts racing, and my palms feel sweaty. My body and mind aren't focused. I want to do well, so I use the strategy **manage big feelings**. I think positive thoughts and say to myself, "You can do this. Stay focused." I remind myself that I've practiced and no matter what happens, it will be okay. I also close my eyes, take deep breaths, and imagine performing my routine. After a few minutes, my mind and body feel better, and I can focus.

The next time you have emotions that make your body or mind go too fast or too slow, use the strategy **manage big feelings** to go just the right speed. When you use the strategy **manage big feelings**, you'll stay focused and make progress even when learning or doing something challenging.

Predict Obstacles (Elementary)

Have you ever tried to learn something, but things just weren't going your way? Maybe you kept making mistakes and became frustrated, or things got in the way of you practicing. An obstacle is something that slows you down or keeps you from making progress. Obstacles can be things that happen to us, or even our own thoughts and feelings.

You can minimize obstacles by using the strategy **predict obstacles**. When you think about possible obstacles that are likely to happen, and plan for how you will overcome these obstacles, you are less likely to give up!

I used the strategy **predict obstacles** to help me finish my math homework. In the past, I'd always had a hard time figuring out how to change word problems into equations. I'd get frustrated, give up, and play on my tablet instead. That same frustration could get in the way of my progress now. I knew I needed to get past these obstacles to improve, so I wrote if-then statements:

- "IF I'm feeling frustrated, THEN I'll take three big breaths and keep trying."
- "IF I'm overwhelmed and don't know how to begin, THEN I'll ask someone for help."
- "IF I keep playing on my tablet instead of working on math, I'll put my tablet away."

I decided that, if I felt frustrated, then I would take deep breaths and ask my mom for help. If she wasn't available, then I would ask my older sister. I also realized that my tablet was a distraction. I decided to leave it in my bedroom and do homework in the living room, where I could more easily ask for help. After identifying the obstacles, I knew how to overcome them.

To determine what could keep you from making progress and identify how you'll respond, use the strategy **predict obstacles** and create if-then statements by asking yourself:

- What obstacles have I experienced before when trying to learn or do something similar?
- What may get in the way of my progress now?
- How will I overcome these obstacles?

Track My Effort & Notice My Progress (Elementary)

Think of a time when you learned to do something that was very challenging. It probably took you a long time to learn and many tries before you were successful. When you stick with something, stay focused, and don't give up, it means that you're making effort to improve your skills. Something that's easy for you doesn't require much effort, but something that's difficult requires much more physical or mental work. Use the strategy **track my effort** to figure out if you're working hard enough. Use the strategy **notice my progress** to determine if you're improving.

Let's say you want to run two laps around your block without stopping. You decide to **track your effort** by marking your calendar every day you run. You think about how hard you ran. At the end of each run, can you sing? If you can't sing, you clearly put in a lot of effort. If you can sing, you likely didn't put in much effort. You note the amount of effort on your calendar for each time you run.

In addition to **tracking your effort**, you **notice your progress** by writing down how long it took you to finish your laps each day. If you run frequently and put in effort, you will eventually be able to finish the two laps around your block without walking, going faster and faster.

When you want to get better at something, use the strategy **track my effort** by asking yourself:

- How much time do I spend working on this?
- When I practice, how do I challenge myself?

Use the strategy **notice my progress** by asking yourself:

- How will I know I'm improving?
- What will I focus on to see my growth?

When you use these two strategies, you'll see how your effort can impact your growth.

Brainstorm My Options & Choose My Response (Elementary)

Have you ever said or done something that you wish you hadn't? Maybe you chose to sleep late on Saturday instead of going to basketball practice, and so you missed most of your shots during the game. Maybe you felt nervous about reading your poem aloud to the class, and instead of taking a deep breath to calm yourself, you yelled, "I can't do this."

We've all made choices that kept us from making progress. When you have something you're working on or want to learn, you'll have to make choices along the way. Some choices will help you make progress, and some won't.

To make choices that will keep you on track, use the strategies **brainstorm my options** and **choose my response**. When you're not sure what to do, stop and think about each choice you could make and its effect on your progress. Then **choose the response** that is best for you.

I used the strategies **brainstorm my options** and **choose my response** when I needed to get better at remembering to do my math homework every day. I brainstormed four options:

1. After school, I could play soccer with my friends for an hour, then go home and do homework. This option would give me a break between school and homework, but it would be very hard for me to stop playing and go do homework instead.
2. After school, I could do my homework right away, then play soccer with friends. I liked this option because I could make sure I got my homework done, though it might mean less time to play soccer.
3. I could wake up an hour early and do my homework before school. I knew right away that this was a bad option because I don't like waking up early and my brain feels foggy in the morning.
4. I could do my homework on the bus to school. This was the worst option because there was no way I could concentrate on the noisy bus!

I considered each of the four options carefully, thinking about my strengths, preferences, family obligations, and other commitments. In the end, I used the strategy **choose my response** and decided doing my homework right after school was the option that worked best for me. It was the best of the four options I had brainstormed to make progress toward my goal.

To plan what to do when you have choices to make, use the strategies **brainstorm my options** and **choose my response**.

Keep Doing ... Stop Doing ... (Elementary)

When you have created a plan to reach a goal, it's important to reflect on how things are going. When you reflect, you think about your actions and determine if they are helping you make progress.

Some of your actions will help you make progress, and some won't. Reflect on your progress by using the strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** Identify what's working by asking yourself:

- Is this action helping me?
- How do I know?

You know an action is working when you make progress or improve over time. After you know what's working, you can determine what you should **keep doing** and **stop doing**.

I used the strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** when I wanted to get better at drawing a landscape. I planned to get feedback from my teacher about my sketches. I also planned to watch YouTube videos on drawing landscapes.

I was following the steps in my plan—getting feedback and watching YouTube videos. I knew I was getting better, because my drawings were more detailed and my teacher said my shadowing techniques were much better. But I didn't have much time before the art contest. I needed to make progress more quickly. I thought about each action in my plan and asked myself if it was working.

I knew that the feedback from my teacher was helping, because it was very specific to what I needed to do. When we compared sketches, I could see how my techniques were improving, so that was an action I should **keep doing**.

I wasn't so sure about watching YouTube videos. I couldn't determine anything specific the videos had taught me or ways they had helped me improve. I decided that watching the videos was an action I should **STOP doing**. Not watching the videos also gave me more time to draw, which I knew was helping me get better!

Use the strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** when you want to identify which action steps are helping you make progress and which ones are NOT. Ask yourself:

- Is this action helping?
- How do I know?

If you can say exactly how the action has helped you, it's something should **keep doing**. If you aren't sure, it's probably something you should **stop doing**. The strategy **keep doing ... stop doing ...** will help you make progress more quickly!

Regulate Even Better (Elementary)

Think about a goal that you have successfully achieved. It could be turning homework in on time, ice-skating without falling, or getting along better with your sibling. Self-Regulation Strategies likely helped you meet that goal. And it's important to think about how you self-regulated to meet a goal, using the strategy **regulate even better**. Think about the entire process of self-regulation. What did you do that helped you meet your goal? Whatever helped you this time can probably help you again when you move on to your next goal. Think about what you did well and which parts were challenging.

When I start planning to learn something new, I use the strategy **regulate even better**. The easiest part of self-regulation for me is **predicting obstacles**. I always write down obstacles so I can think of ways to avoid them. Looking back on all the hard things I've done before gives me the confidence I need to overcome new obstacles.

The hardest part of self-regulation for me is **breaking it down**. Sometimes I think all at once about everything I have to do as just a couple large, complex steps. When I do that, it's easy to feel like I'll never reach my goal. Because I find **breaking it down** hard, I tell someone my plan and look for ways together to turn a big goal into several smaller tasks.

Now that you've used self-regulation to reach your goal, use the strategy **regulate even better**. By reflecting on what you find easy and difficult, you will improve your ability to self-regulate.