

Are You a Creator? An Essay for Kids!*
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Kids seem to come in two basic designs: some are good at school and some are good at creating. There are also some who are good at both, and everybody can become better at one or the other. Those who are good at school can become better at creating, and those who are good at creating can become better at school.

If your parents were both good at school, you stand a better chance of being good at school as well. If one of your parents was not so good at school, you might struggle with school, too. So what can you do about it?

Well, you can be stressed, or you forget to do your homework, or you can put off your homework, or you can argue with your teachers, or you can refuse to go to school. But these don't solve the problem. Worse, they keep you from being able to reach your goals in life. You need a **real** solution. I have one for you.

Learning isn't hard. You learn lots of things quite easily. You're really smart outside of school. What are the things you do really well?

I'll bet you missed some things that are important. Check which of these things are easy for you:

- Drawing _____
- Taking things apart _____
- Making new things out of old stuff _____
- Singing _____
- Building with Legos or K'Nex _____
- Playing computer games _____
- Puzzles _____
- Making friends with animals _____
- Knowing how to get to places you visited once _____
- Making up silly jokes _____
- Making up stories _____
- Making someone who is sad feel better _____
- Hugging _____
- Pretending to be somebody else _____
- Playing by yourself _____
- Exploring _____
- Arguing _____

If you checked a lot of these things, you are probably a different kind of learner: a **visual-spatial learner** (or VSL). You think in pictures instead of words. You think about things all at once instead of step-by-step. You have a wonderful imagination. You know more than others think you know. You solve problems in unusual ways. You *know* things, and you can't always explain how you know them.

You may have trouble with spelling. You may have a hard time memorizing your multiplication facts. You may lose track of time. You are probably not well organized. But you can do some things that amaze others, like being able to see something upside-down or from different angles in your head. You are a natural builder or inventor. You may be an artist or a musician or a storyteller or a whiz with computers or someone who can take things apart and figure out how they work. You may be great with numbers or puzzles or science. You may be especially kind to others, knowing just how other people (or animals) feel.

VSLs have secret powers. If you are a VSL, you can change the world. You can change school. You can change anything that you can picture in your mind. Here's a test of your secret powers. See if you can make people smile—even people you don't know. Smile and see if they smile back.

You can change the world because you can *create* something new. You can change school because you can *create* new ways to do things. You can change anything by seeing it clearly in your mind. It takes time and practice, but picturing things really works.

Try this. Close your eyes and picture yourself catching a ball. Can you slow the picture down in your mind? Can you see where the ball is going to land if you don't catch it? Can you put yourself in line with the ball? Can you see yourself catching the ball?

Ask someone to throw you a ball. Right before they throw the ball, close your eyes and picture the ball slowly coming toward you. Picture yourself catching it perfectly. Then have them throw it. Were you able to catch it? Keep doing this and you will become better and better at catching balls. You can use this trick to become better at anything you want to do!

Your secret power is the power to picture things in your mind. It can help you learn better. It can make school fun. It can help you be good at sports. It can help you make friends. It can help you solve problems, like getting your homework done.

[insert cartoon from page 272 in book]

Here are some ideas of how you can help yourself with schoolwork:

1. When the teacher teaches you a new lesson, close your eyes and picture it in your mind's eye.

2. When you are reading, close your eyes at each punctuation mark and picture what you are reading.
3. Picture spelling words in your mind. Make wild and crazy pictures out of the letters. Spell each spelling word **backward** by looking at your picture. If you can spell the word backward, you can spell it forward. You'll remember your picture.
4. When you have to remember something, see if you can put it to music.
5. Can you make videotapes in your mind of concepts you are learning at school? Can you speed up the videotape? Can you slow it down and play it in slow motion? Can you zoom in on some part of it? Can you freeze one frame and study it closely? Can you rewind your tape, and do an instant replay of one part?
6. Use your imagination to make a lesson or an assignment more interesting. Can you create a story about it? Can you draw a picture of it? Can you make something three-dimensional to represent the concept? Can you make a game out of it?
7. Can you relate what you are learning to something you love?
8. Color-code ideas you are trying to learn with a highlighter. Are some ideas easier to remember in blue? Red? Purple?
9. Can you learn to use a keyboard and type your assignments?
10. Create a fantasy in your imagination about what you are learning. It makes the subject more fun, and helps you remember the material better.
11. If you have trouble lining up numbers when you add or subtract them, try using graph paper, or turn lined paper sideways.
12. If you have trouble memorizing your math facts, try drawing a picture to represent the most difficult ones. If you like ice cream cones, but you can't remember 7×3 , draw 7 ice cream cones, each with 3 scoops of ice cream. Put $7 \times 3 = \underline{\quad}$ at the top, and $3 \times 7 = \underline{\quad}$ at the bottom. Count the scoops and write in the answer. Put your picture up in your bedroom until you can picture your ice cream cones each time you hear 7×3 or 3×7 . Draw a different picture for each of the other math facts that stump you.
13. If you have trouble creating outlines for papers, use the computer program, *Inspiration*, (or *Kidspiration*) to help you organize your ideas visually.
14. If you have trouble finishing tests during class time, ask your teacher for more time.
15. If you keep forgetting your books, ask to borrow a second set to use at home.

16. Write down your assignments in a planning book, so that you know when they are due. If you have trouble understanding an assignment, ask your teacher.

17. If you have trouble completing an assignment, come up with a creative way to demonstrate your understanding of the material in another way. Can you make a Power Point slide show for the class instead of writing a paper? Can you create a diorama or some other three-dimensional project?

18. If you have an assignment log, keep it updated daily. Set a deadline every night for your homework.

There are lots of ways you can help yourself with schoolwork. Maybe you've figured out some ways on your own that no one else has. We'd love for you to send us your ideas so that we could share them with other kids like you. Please send your ideas to our website: www.visualspatial.org. We will post them on a bulletin board to help other visual-spatial learners.

Now do you see what I mean by your special power? You can use this power to be successful in school, even though school may not be your favorite place. You can use this special power to help you with any challenge you face! Then, if you can find a way to make learning fun, and make it easier for you to learn, you'll have found a way to reach your dreams and goals in life.

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