

3 Signs A Skill Isn't Going to Stick

(And what to do about each one.)

1 It's taught at a table and used in a store, a kitchen, or a bathroom.

Money gets taught with worksheets and used at a register. Cooking gets taught with picture cards and used at a stove. Every foot of distance between where a skill is taught and where it is needed is a foot your child has to cross on his own, without help, usually while something else is going on. Most people don't.

WHAT TO DO → SAY THIS

"Where does my child actually need to use this? Can we teach it there instead of here?"

2 It gets practiced once a week — or once a month.

Count the real opportunities, not the goal sheet. A grocery-store skill practiced on a Friday community outing is four repetitions a month. Think about how many times you did something before it stopped requiring thought. Four a month isn't a teaching plan. It's an appearance.

WHAT TO DO → SAY THIS

"How many real opportunities does he get to practice this in a week? If it's under five, what would it take to get there?"

3 Nobody has asked whether there's an easier way to do the same thing.

Laces take months to learn and fail under stress. Slip-ons take a second and never fail. A pullover instead of buttons. A debit card instead of counting exact change. The goal is the outcome — dressed, fed, paid — not the hardest available route to it. How much effort a task takes is a teaching decision, and almost nobody makes it on purpose.

WHAT TO DO → SAY THIS

"Is there an easier way for him to get the same result? I'd rather he be independent with the easy version than dependent on the hard one."

THE FULL METHOD IS IN THE BOOK.

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