

Overlearning: Making Learning Stick!

What Is Overlearning?
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Key Benefits for Students

- Boosts Confidence
- Improves Retention
- Frees Up Brainpower

Why Parents Should Help
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How to Support Overlearning at Home

- Make it Fun!
- More, Frequent Practice
- Short, Frequent Practice
- Vary the Practice
- Review Regularly
- Positive Reinforcement

Long Lane Support
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Long Lane Primary

What is Overlearning?

To overlearn is "to continue studying or practicing (something) after initial proficiency has been achieved so as to reinforce or ingrain the learned material or skill,"

It is true that, as children become more skilled at a task, the amount of energy used to perform that task decreases. This means that if they are well practiced in a skill or task, they will be able to use less effort, making the task more manageable or enjoyable. This also means that there will be more room for learning another step or deepening the skill learned without too much cognitive load (brain power).

At school, we are always including as much practice in our lessons as possible. This can be repetitive and takes time. We all know that different learners learn in

different ways and grow at their own pace. This can mean that for some, they have not had enough practice time before moving on to the next concept or more deeper learning. Teacher's manage these different needs as best they can in the classroom to ensure that some children have additional practice and those that can move on are not held back and are challenged. We call this either 'differentiation' or 'scaffolding'. Sometimes referred to as 'equity' - each child getting the support they need to reach the same goal.

Essentially overlearning is practicing a skill until we become proficient and confident in it. However, the children are not only using the memory in their brain to remember the skill. Overlearning and additional practice provides muscle memory. This is the act of your memory taking over so that you are no longer having to exert effort to do the task.

An example of this would be with handwriting – eventually your muscle memory (hand) does it for you. Equally with times tables – some have to think for a while and for others it has entered the 'long term memory' and they can recall it with ease, sometimes not even knowing how they got there.

Key Benefits for Students

- **Develops Automaticity:** Continued practice helps tasks become "second nature". This means a child can perform a skill, like reading a word or solving a math problem, without having to stop and think about the steps.
- **Boosts Confidence:** As skills become effortless, children feel more capable and less anxious when using them in real-world or high-pressure situations.

- **Reduces "Brain Drain":** When a basic skill is overlearned, it uses less working memory. This frees up "mental space" for the child to focus on more complex challenges, such as critical thinking or creative problem-solving.
- **Strengthens Memory Retention:** Research shows that overlearning creates more robust neural pathways, making information harder to forget over time.
- **Improves Performance Under Stress:** Skills that have been overlearned are more likely to be executed reliably during exams, sports competitions, or musical performances.

Why should I help my child with overlearning?

In the classroom our teachers do everything they can to ensure that all pupils have the practice they need for skills they require for the curriculum each term. We do this by building on skills a little bit in each year group and by supporting individuals and groups with overlearning as intervention or a booster group. However, the curriculum is full and teaching has to keep pace. We need help to ensure that children have had sufficient practice with a skill and this is why we ask parents to help with this for home learning. In each year group we have developed the skills that would need to be practiced in order to move on to the next part of the curriculum – ***click here***.

How can I help with ‘overlearning’ at home?

You will know if your child is proficient or not if they can recall said facts or skills easily with minimal effort.

Practical Implementation for Parents

To use overlearning effectively at home, consider these strategies:

- **Spaced Repetition** - Instead of one long session, revisit the material, skill or task for short periods over several days – ie, handwriting, spelling, number facts
- **Self-Quizzing** - Use flashcards or blank maps to help your child test their own recall.
- **Vary the Practice** - Practice the same skill in different ways, such as using a new vocabulary word in several different sentences.
- **Use simple games** – scavenger hunt, snap, treasure hunt, swatting the word/number fact, etc to make the retention and practice more fun

(Many children like repetitive games or tasks as they become confident and can do them independently. Of course, you will need to guide them and check in to ensure they are not learning incorrectly or picking up bad habits).

What do Long Lane offer to support overlearning?

- IXL – we pay for each child to have a login for this site which has hundreds of activities and games to support overlearning of english and maths for every year group. This is an intuitive and independent app that can be used practically anywhere.
- Times Table Rock Stars – Each child has a login for this game where they can play against others or on their own to practice times tables
- Each class page has a list of skills that need to be practiced and overlearned in their year group with links to supporting websites

- Use the list of games that can be used for overlearning – ***click here***
- Ask your child's teacher if you run out of ideas, I'm sure they will have many and can guide you with supporting your child's individual needs