

8. Systems Activity: Chunking Steps

The higher you progress up the school, the more likely it is that you are going to get pieces of work that require more than one sitting to complete. This means that probably you will be unlikely to sit down and finish the whole activity or project in one go. Gone are the Key Stage 3 days when most homework could be completed within fifteen or twenty minutes!

Sooner or later you're going to get a piece of homework or coursework that you know is going to take a few hours to complete. At first this can be quite daunting. Often, when we are faced with a large piece of work like this we procrastinate (put it off) because we're not sure where to start.

There's an old Chinese proverb that says, 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.' Chunking will help you to take that first step.

Here's how it works. Let's imagine that you've decided to run a marathon in a year's time. There are a number of things you might need to do (run a lot of miles is the obvious one!), but you can't go straight out and run twenty-six miles. You first need to first break down all the tasks you might need to do:

- » Buy some trainers
- » Find a coach
- » Enter a race
- » Join a running club
- » Run a 10K

This would be the start of the list – there's much more than we've listed here. The second step is to set yourself some milestones (what you need to have done and by when).

You can use the same process with a long and challenging piece of work. Here are the steps you might need to take:

- » **Step 1:** Identify the goal. How will you know when the task is complete? What will it look like? When will it be?

- » **Step 2:** Write down everything you will need to do to complete the task – everything you can think of from the start to the end. Your ideas might come out in a crazy order – that's fine! You can sort them out later.

October Activities

» **Step 3:** Decide the order of activities using the diagram below, adding them to the steps. Don't forget to include a deadline for each step.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Now pin this up somewhere clear and prominent, and check it regularly!

Final Thoughts

When pupils use the chunking activity, one challenge they face to sticking to the steps at each stage. If you don't do the activities on the first step, it's unlikely that you'll meet the deadline. Think about the impact this could have on your time and your stress levels!

One useful strategy is to get someone to hold you accountable (yes, that means checking on you!). Decide who you are going to ask and then share your plan with them.

Who might be good at holding you accountable?

.....

