TAKING INITIATIVE

IT BEGINS WITH A GREAT IDEA

ED U. GATOR GETS THE JOB DONE

WALT DISNEY’S CREATIONS
TAKING INITIATIVE

How many times have you said, "I've got a great idea!" Probably a lot, because your brain is always thinking. You might get an idea about what you want to do, or what you want to eat, or what you want to make. So what happens next after you get this great idea? Well, you could just sit around wishing you were doing whatever it is you thought of, or YOU COULD START DOING IT! That's what's called taking initiative. It's thinking of an idea, and then acting on it. Simple, right? Well, that's how things get done!

Look around your world. Almost everything you use during the day started out as somebody's great idea. Take, for example, computers, telephones, toothbrushes, roller blades and bicycles. There are millions of things that we take for granted that somebody had to think of first. But the important thing is that somebody didn't just stop with an idea. He or she worked very hard and probably made many mistakes before creating these useful inventions. Part of taking initiative is setting a goal and reaching it, no matter what obstacles or challenges are in the way. It's kind of like cleaning up after an activity. If you wanted to do a really good job, you'd put away all of your stuff and you wouldn't stop till everything was back in its proper place. That's called finishing a task. That's called taking initiative. That's called doing something that can make you really proud of yourself!

VOCABULARY:
Creating: making something for the first time.
Invention: something that is created.
Obstacle: anything that gets in the way of doing something.
Challenge: something that requires skill and effort.
Task: work that must be done.

ACTIVITY:
Okay, imagine that you're in a dark room at night. Think about the ways you could give yourself a little light. One way might be very obvious, but don't stop there. Use your brain!
Friends, Ed here. Growing up isn't always easy. Last week Mom and Dad gave me some chores to do around the house. They said I was old enough now to take some responsibility. Oh boy, that sounded kind of scary at first. But they explained to me that it would help around the house if everybody pitched in a little bit. That sounded okay to me, so I told them I would do my best. "That's all we ask," said Dad.

Well, the problem is I haven't really been doing my best. One of my chores is taking the garbage out to the trash cans every night after dinner, and taking the trash cans to the corner for pick up once a week. Well, last week my mind was on other things and Mom and Dad had to remind me every night to do my job. By Thursday I could tell they were getting upset. I guess they were disappointed in me. Then something really bad happened. Thursday night I forgot to take the trash cans out to the corner, so our trash never got picked up. Boy, it was getting really stinky back there! Then late Saturday night some raccoons got into our garbage and spread food and papers and junk all over our back yard. What a mess! It was completely my fault, so Dad made me clean up every last bit by myself. I wasn't feeling too good about myself. It was a good lesson though, because it was so yucky I decided never to let that happen again!

So starting this week I took some initiative. Each night after dinner, I cleared all the plates and took out the garbage before I was even asked. Tuesday I took out the recycling stuff, too. On Thursday night I went out before dark and moved all the cans to the corner of our yard. Then I had an idea in case those pesky raccoons returned. I tied up all the cans with some old bungee cords I found in the garage.

Mom said I was acting like a real grown-up, being responsible and following through on my chores without being reminded. She was especially impressed by my bungee cord idea! Dad said he was really proud of me, too. And you know what? For the first time in weeks, I was really proud of myself!

**QUESTIONS**

1) Why did Ed say growing up is sometimes hard?

2) What did Mom and Dad expect Ed to do?

3) How did Ed let his parents down? How did that make Ed feel?

4) What happened to Ed that turned out to be a good lesson?

5) What did Ed do differently after the raccoon mess?

6) What was his good idea to make his job easier?

7) What did Mom and Dad say about Ed's hard work? In the end, how did Ed feel about himself?
RE-CREATE THESE CREATIONS

Directions: Below are pictures of three of the world’s most important inventions: the light bulb, the telephone and the computer. The problem is, the parts of the pictures are all mixed up! Your challenge is to cut them out and paste them together the right way. Good luck!

COMPLETE THE TASK

Directions: Somebody started the words below, but didn’t take the time to finish them. Do you think you could take the initiative to complete these words? (If you need some help, the answers are listed below.)

1. R-E-S-P-O-N-S-I-
2. C-H-A-L-
3. I-N-I-T-I-A-
4. C-O-M-P-L-

ANSWERS:
1. Responsibility
2. Challenge
3. Initiative
4. Complete
IN THE NEWSPAPER

Directions: On page 2 we talked about some objects or inventions that you use every day at school and at home. Look through the paper and cut out as many pictures as you can find of things you use.

I’M TAKING INITIATIVE

Directions: Think about the things you did last week. List below some of the things you did without being asked. They might be things your family expected you to do, like a chore, or things you thought of all by yourself!

_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
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_________________________________________________________________
It was that time of year again. Time to get out the old lemonade stand. Time to set up shop in the front yard and whip up pitchers of Leon's ice-cold homemade lemonade! He dug up his old wooden sign which read: LEON'S FAMOUS LEMONADE 25 CENTS A GLASS! He dug up his old wooden table and bench, too. He went into the kitchen, squeezed about 50 lemons into jugs of water and added several tablespoons of sugar. Leon made himself a glass and finished it in three gulps. "Mmm," he said to himself, "good as ever!"

Leon sat in the front yard for two hours before any customers showed up. Finally around noon, Leon's neighbors pulled into the driveway and each bought a glass. "How's it been going?" asked Mr. Cooper.

"Kind of slow," said Leon. "In fact, you're my first sale of the day!"

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"Could be you have some competition from down the street this year," said Mrs. Cooper. Leon couldn't believe it. Somebody else was selling lemonade in the neighborhood and taking away his business! Leon got on his bike and rode down the block. Sure enough, two little girls had a stand on the corner of Main and Juniper Street. There was a long line of customers waiting for a drink. Leon was really discouraged. He drove back home and sat with his head in his hand. Every once in a while a customer would wander over, but it was still incredibly slow. Leon looked at his coin box. Only four quarters! He sat and sat and sat. Then Leon got a great idea! He ran inside and made up a brand new sign with bright colors. He taped it to a big stick he found in the back yard and hammered it into the ground at the busiest intersection in town. In big bold letters it read: COME TRY A REFRESHING TASTE OF LEON'S FAMOUS HOMEMADE LEMONADE! 25 CENTS A GLASS. SPECIAL TODAY: FREE REFILLS!

Leon raced home just in time to meet the cars and walkers lining up at his lemonade stand. He was kept very busy for the rest of the afternoon. His Mom came out to lend a hand while Leon went inside to mix up another batch. Even with free refills, Leon made more money than ever before. As he took down his stand for the day, Leon started thinking about ways he could make next weekend's lemonade sale even bigger! At the end of the day, Leon was exhausted. But he smiled proudly at his four big jars full of quarters. "It's amazing," he said to himself. "A little hard work and a little initiative go a long, long way!"
he name Disney is famous all over the world. There are Disney Stores, Disneyland and Disney World amusement parks, Disney movies, television shows, books, clothes and CD-ROMs. Most kids have a favorite Disney character, like Belle from Beauty and the Beast, or Buzz Lightyear from Toy Story. It all started years ago with a man named Walter Elias Disney. Disney was born in Chicago on December 5, 1901. He studied art at schools in Chicago and Kansas City, Missouri. In 1923 Disney began making animated, or cartoon movies. By 1928 he had started his own movie company, and had produced a feature called Steamboat Willie, which introduced Mickey Mouse. Mickey Mouse is still one of the most beloved characters in the world! Steamboat Willie was the first cartoon to use sound. Disney pioneered the use of color in cartoons with his 1932 film Flowers and Trees. In 1937 he produced the first feature-length cartoon called Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. In the next few years he made Pinocchio, Fantasia and Bambi. All of these films are still enjoyed by young and old people today!

Disney kept thinking of great ideas to add to his growing popularity as a filmmaker. He developed comic strips featuring Donald Duck and Pluto and published a series of books for children. He opened two huge amusement parks and created three television shows: Davy Crockett, The Mickey Mouse Club and Walt Disney’s Wonderful World of Color. His incredible talent, brilliant ideas, hard work and ability to take initiative made him one of the most successful people who ever lived.

VOCABULARY:

Introduce: to make known or present.
Pioneer: to do something for the first time.
Develop: to bring into being.
Publish: to put something out in a book, magazine or newspaper.
Brilliant: very smart.
TIPS

1) Developing the ability to complete tasks and follow through on activities is very important, but difficult to learn in these fast-paced times. We often rush our children through a busy day and then get frustrated by their diminishing attention spans. Look for opportunities during the day, or at least during the week, when motion is at a minimum.

2) Give your child some "free time" that isn’t restricted by activities you direct. Encourage your child to "use his imagination" and play independently, without your participation. This may "free" up some time for you, too!

3) Kids can learn a great deal from television, but it can also limit a child’s creativity. While watching TV, a child doesn’t have to interact with anyone or use her imagination. Sometimes this "down time" is necessary for busy families, but the amount of time watching television should be carefully monitored.

4) As your child learns to take initiative, he may make mistakes along the way. Most learning is based on trial and error. Be sure not to criticize or belittle your child for his attempts at independence, or he may decide he’s incapable of doing these tasks and give up trying. Look for creative and gentle ways to educate and "redirect" your child back on course.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

We all have household projects that go unfinished weekend to weekend. Get together as a family and make a list of some of the ones that have been lingering for a long time. Encourage your child to make suggestions about how to accomplish one or more of these projects. If possible, let your child participate in the completion of the task. Your child will learn the value of following through a project to its fruition, and your whole family will benefit by striking one more task off the list!

RESOURCES