OVERVIEW

Students with a growth mindset about their intelligence achieve more in school. Having a growth mindset helps students persevere when work is hard, seek out new approaches and strategies, and work harder rather than give up when schoolwork gets difficult.

This lesson was developed in collaboration with PERTS.

OBJECTIVE

Identify how brains grow stronger

LESSON TIPS

- This lesson and the lesson that follows it derive from a research-based intervention developed at Stanford University shown to have positive effects on students’ academic success. It’s particularly recommended that both lessons be taught in order and as presented.

- If students are having a hard time finding ideas to complete the Video 2 portion of the handout, replay section 1:15–1:32 or 2:50–3:00.

PREP

- Paper and pencil
- (Optional) Art supplies
- Partners

THEMES

- Academic Success
- Growth Mindset
What’s one thing you’ve worked hard to get better at?
What did you do to get better?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS
I practiced. I asked people for help.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION
What’s something you’ve watched one of your friends get better at? How did he or she do it?

Can your brain get stronger?

VIDEO SUMMARY
Being smart isn’t something you inherit from your parents. You can grow your brain and get smarter by challenging yourself and learning new things.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION
Raise your hand if you thought it was difficult at first.

Raise your hand if you’ve ever done something that made your brain stronger.

What’s one thing you’ve done recently that made your brain stronger?
How could you tell your brain was getting stronger?

POSSIBLE ANSWERS
Learned to do a layup. Learned a new song.
I had to try hard. I had to ask for help. It took a lot of practice.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION
Was it worth it to make your brain stronger? Why?

When you learn new things, what happens to your brain?

VIDEO SUMMARY
Learning new things physically changes the brain, making it stronger. Using good strategies, asking for help, and working hard are key to learning new things and growing your brain.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY
Partners list all the things they do in a day that make their brains stronger.

ACTIVITY EXTENSION
Have each student make a list of unusual things they’ve learned to do (like juggling).
Have students volunteer to demonstrate or share something they have learned to do.

Describe one new thing you can do this week to make your brain stronger.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT
Look for students to identify at least one thing they can reasonably start doing over the next week.