

Tips for Managing Your Child's **HOMework**



Homework can be an important tool to help children practice their skills and improve their learning. Homework can enhance children's personal growth by teaching responsibility, good work habits, organization, and time management. However, homework also can be disruptive to family life. It can create conflict and interfere with recreation and social activities.

Children need to learn to do their homework on their own. They need to begin and complete it on time. They need to stick with it even when it gets hard. They need to check and correct their work.

Below are specific strategies and methods you can use to help your children to do their homework on their own and on time.

Tip #1: Provide a well-lit work area, equipped with needed supplies

You can support your child's efforts to complete his homework by providing him with the right workspace at home. A good work area has adequate space and lighting, has the needed supplies close (see table at right), and is relatively free from distractions.

Tip #2: Control and limit meaningful distractions

Some children and teens frequently choose to do their homework while listening to a radio or watching TV. However, noise can be distracting. Just how distracting it is depends on the situation and the type of noise.

Audio and visual distractions tend to interfere more with difficult than easy tasks. Meaningful background noise, such as TV, speech, and vocal music, tend to be more distracting than instrumental music or other nonvocal noise. As a rule, you should try to control and limit meaningful distractions, such as telephone, TV, vocal music, and interruptions from others, during homework time. You can be less concerned about nonvocal background noise during easy assignments, if your child is completing her work.

Tip #3: Help your child keep homework organized

Homework can help children develop their skills in organizing and managing time. Three organizational methods can help your child stay organized.

First, your child can use a calendar. Without planning, homework can interfere with important social and recreational activities. Teach your child how to make a daily and weekly schedule for his activities (see figure below). Each day, have your child decide

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils/pens/markers <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil sharpener <input type="checkbox"/> Eraser <input type="checkbox"/> White out <input type="checkbox"/> Glue/paste/tape <input type="checkbox"/> Writing paper <input type="checkbox"/> Index cards <input type="checkbox"/> Ruler <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors <input type="checkbox"/> Stapler <input type="checkbox"/> Calculator <input type="checkbox"/> Dictionary/Thesaurus | <p>Homework
Supplies</p> |
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what he needs to do and when he will do it. This should include a listing of all homework assignments and other activities and responsibilities. It is good to order the homework assignments, sandwiching the harder assignments in between the easier assignments. At the beginning of the week, list out all the activities for the week. This will help your child plan. For example, if your child has a Social Studies test on Wednesday, and he needs two days to study for it, he can plan to bring his book home Monday and Tuesday nights.

Things To Do Today	<u>Mon.</u>	<u>Tues.</u>	<u>Wed.</u>	<u>Thurs.</u>	<u>Fri.</u>	<u>Sat.</u>	<u>Sun.</u>
3:00-3:30 Snack and watch TV		Baseball	SS	Book	Spelling		Pool
3:30-4:30 Homework:		game 7:30	Test!!!	report	test		party
1. Read			Guitar	due			4:00
2. Math worksheet			lesson				
3. Write out spelling words			5:00				
4:30-5:00 Eat supper							
5:00-6:30 Baseball practice							
6:30-7:30 Play outside							
7:30-8:00 Practice instrument							
Daily and weekly schedule example							

Second, your child can use a journal to keep track of his homework each day. If his school does not provide a journal, he can use a pad or notebook to write down daily assignments, test dates, project instructions, and other important school information. Third, your child can use a folder to keep her papers organized. She can place loose papers needed for future studies, such as study guides, in the left side of the folder. She can place papers that she needs to turn in the next day in the right side of the folder.

Tip #4: Find out how much and how often homework is expected

In order to monitor your child’s homework effectively you need to know what to expect. Check with your child’s teacher about the school or classroom homework policy. Find out how much and how often homework is expected at your child’s grade level. Based on surveys of students and teachers from across the country, you should expect your child to have some homework to do each week. You should expect the number of nights and the amount of homework to increase as your child progresses from elementary to high school (see table below).

Amount and Frequency of Homework by Grade Level		
<i>Level</i>	<i>Amount</i>	<i>Nights per week</i>
3 rd -6 th grade	30 to 45 minutes	3
7 th -9 th grade	45-75 minutes	4
10 th -12 th grade	75-120 minutes	4 or more

Your child may need to spend time at home on other tasks not assigned by the teacher, such as studying for tests and organizing. How much time is needed will also depend on your child’s skill level. For example, children with average or below average skills may need more time to learn material than those with above average skills. Some use 10 minutes per grade level (for example, 40 minutes for a 4th grader, 60 minutes for a 6th

grader) as a rule of thumb for how much time, on average, their child should be spending at home on school related work.

Once you have an idea of how much time your child will need for homework, you can communicate that expectation to your child. What you expect plays an important role in keeping your child motivated. If your child is spending more or less time than is expected on homework, check with your child and the teacher to find out why.

Tip #5: Monitor your child's daily homework

While your child is learning to use good homework habits, it will be important for you to closely watch, keep track of, and check your child's homework and studying. This can include the following.

- Check that your child wrote homework assignments and upcoming tests in daily assignment journal
- Help your child organize what needs to be done that night
- Watch that your child is staying on task and using good study habits during homework
- Check the homework for completion and accuracy
- Supervise the organization of completed work into a homework folder

This close monitoring will communicate to your child the importance of homework.

Tip #6: Support rather than help do homework

A national survey of school district policies showed that schools most often recommended that parents play a supportive rather than teaching role with their child's homework. The purpose of homework is usually to give students a chance to practice skills already taught in school. You should not have to tutor your child or help him complete his homework. If your child does not understand the homework, it may be an indication that he was not paying attention when the teacher taught the task in class.

Helping your child complete his homework or sitting with him through the homework may increase his dependence on you. You should provide your child with the support he needs to complete his homework on his own. Many of the tips discussed in this article are suggestions on how to provide your child with support.

Tip #7: Be supportive and encouraging, avoid criticism and punishment

Your general approach with your child around homework should be positive. You should encourage your child to work hard during homework and be neat and accurate. Avoid negative methods, such as criticizing, arguing, or punishing. This can be hard to do when she is resisting homework. Negative methods will work against what you are trying to accomplish in the long term. You want your child to approach new challenges with confidence in her abilities, to have a feeling that she has control over her learning, and to be proud of her accomplishments. You can help accomplish these goals through being supportive and encouraging over time. When problems arise, your job should be to try to understand and help solve them.

Tip #8: Check completed homework for neatness and accuracy and give feedback

When the homework is completed, check it for neatness and accuracy. Have your child redo messy work. If you find errors, have your child correct them. If your child is young, show him which items are incorrect and let him correct them on his own. As your child gets better at checking, you can give him feedback that is more general. For example, you can tell him how many errors you found on a page or in a set of items, without telling him which ones are incorrect. He can find and correct them on his own. This will give your child practice in proofreading and checking.

Tip #9: Praise efforts and independence

You should make a special effort to give your child frequent praise for the effort she puts into homework and her attempts to work independently. A general rule for using praise is to do it soon, often, and powerfully. Praise in a warm tone of voice and include a statement about what pleased you. For example, "I really like how you worked hard on your homework tonight! And you did it all by yourself! I am very proud of you!" Frequent praise that you relate directly to your child's effort and independence can promote positive emotions, confidence, and an increased sense of control over learning.

Tip #10: Communicate with the teacher

Homework is a partnership between school and home designed to improve your child's learning. Do not be afraid to contact your child's teacher when problems occur. Consider talking with the teacher when any of the following occur.

- If your child has very little homework, check to see if the teacher is assigning it. If your child is completing assigned homework somewhere other than home, check with the teacher to see if it is being turned in and accurate.
- If your child fails to remember assignments or bring home books or materials, you will need to work with him to develop his organizational skills. Teaching your child to use a homework journal is a good way to keep track of assignments. At first, you may need to enlist the help of the teacher to monitor use of the journal at school.
- If your child has a pattern of not knowing how to do her homework, it may be a sign that she is not participating in class or has not learned the skill. Teachers typically give homework instructions in class. Talk with the teacher to find out what may be going on.
- Talk with the teacher if your child is regularly spending too much time with homework. Too much homework can demoralize your child and interfere with family life. If your child is regularly bringing home uncompleted schoolwork, this can be a sign of a problem with classroom performance. Your child may need an evaluation, classroom modifications, or other services to address the problem. If it is taking too long because your child is not making good use of his time, you may need to use a goal-setting method (see Tip #12). If your child is working hard and completing his work accurately, but it is taking more time than the teacher expects, ask the teacher to consider reducing the workload.

Tip #11: Model learning

Most children and teens adopt the values of their parents. You can show your child that you value learning by doing educational activities in her presence. Let your child see you reading. Have reading materials available in your home. Talk with her about current events. Take her with you to the library.

Tip #12: Use a goal setting strategy

Goal setting is a very useful strategy for improving homework performance and independence. It improves motivation by assisting children in managing their own homework, providing immediate feedback, and rewarding goal accomplishment. Goal setting includes the following steps.

Divide daily homework assignments into smaller units. Work with your child to estimate how long it will take to finish all of the homework for the evening. Break the work times into smaller units that will fit with your child's ability to stay engaged. For example, if your child has 60 minutes of homework, break it down into three 20-minute, four 15-minute, or six 10-minute segments, depending on his ability to stay on task. Let him take a brief break (no more than 5 minutes) between each work period and move around.

Set a goal for each work period. Give your child enough work that she can complete with effort within the work period. For example, a goal could be to complete 10 math problems accurately in 10 minutes.

Use a timer. Use a kitchen timer to help your child keep track of the time.

Encourage independence. Before starting, make sure your child understands the directions. Have him work alone during the work periods. To encourage independence, limit the number of times he can ask for help (for example, he can only ask for help once during each work period).

Increase motivation by using rewards. You can increase your child's motivation to stay engaged in homework by adding some external rewards. You can use praise and tangible rewards or privileges for attaining goals. You should provide immediate rewards after each work period, or you can use a point system and provide a reward at the end of the homework time. Sometimes a simple reward can increase motivation, such as a cheese cracker, jellybean, or penny for each math problem completed. Make sure your child knows what the reward will be for each completed goal before each work period.

Review work after each work period and reward goals met. Check your child's work when the timer goes off. After each work period, reward effort and accomplishment of goal with a sincere, warm praise; for example, "You worked hard this work period and met your goal, good job." You should reward each successful work period with the promised tangible reward.



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