



HOMework

Homework is used by teachers to reinforce lessons learned in class, to provide practice of those lessons, and to help children gain beneficial study and work habits. Difficulties around completing homework are among the most common conflicts between parents and their school-aged children. While homework may create many arguments between children and parents, its completion is important for school success. Some of the reasons children avoid doing or completing their homework go beyond a child just not wanting to do so. Children can find assignments to be boring and repetitive. Sometimes a teacher has not prepared students adequately for a specific homework assignment, and some assignments may be too difficult for a child. As children progress through school, homework can become exceedingly difficult. Struggles with homework can challenge a child's self-esteem and lead to chronic avoidance.

Homework problems can include:

- having difficulty sustaining attention to the task at hand.
- displaying an inability to plan ahead, break down tasks, and create time schedules.
- frequently forgetting to write down, complete, or turn in homework assignments.
- taking too long to complete homework.
- avoiding homework until the last minute, then completing it in a sloppy and hasty manner.

Difficulty with homework completion can be seen in children who have:

- poor organizational skills.
- problems in sustaining attention and effort to challenging tasks.
- an inability to get started on tasks and manage their time effectively.
- Learning Disabilities.
- slow processing speed (which results in homework taking an exceedingly long amount of time).
- a lack of structure around homework completion.

Recommendations

1. Consult with your child's teacher about the child's specific difficulties with homework. The teacher may be able offer suggestions on ways both of you can help the child to complete homework.
2. Schedule homework time as part of your daily routine. Like adults, children often have times of the day when they work best. Working with your child to determine what these times are for the child could be important in determining a homework schedule.
3. Schedule and plan homework assignments and long-term projects. Mark the family calendar to show when each task needs to be started and completed. Leap Frog has a product called Fly Pen that records what you write and includes a calendar, schedule, dozens of games, time, and more. For more information go to <http://www.flypentop.com/view/page.basic/whatisfly/sidedoor/whatisfly>
4. Assist children in learning organizational skills. Determine a specified place to put their backpack at the end of the school day. Give them a calendar/ day planner and work together to put down a schedule of activities and particular assignments or projects. Provide a drawer for keeping materials for homework (such as pencils, pens, paper, and art supplies) and work together to keep materials organized and put away on a regular basis. The organization tool Homework Manager (found at www.onlineorganizing.com) offers weekly assignment pages, a pocket for storing handouts, a list of classmate study partners, progress charts for each class, a section for parent notes to teachers, and a check-off of finished homework.
5. Create a comfortable environment for your child to do homework. Some children do better in a quiet, isolated place, while others can get much more work done in very different settings. Be sure to tailor the environment to match the child's needs. Issues such as lighting, room temperature, placement of windows, and comfort of chairs and tables can have an important impact.
6. It may be important for your child to have assistance in getting started on and planning how to carry out doing homework. Some children do best by starting with the toughest assignment to get it out of the way. Others do better by starting on an easier assignment to develop a sense of success and assist them in getting focused on doing the work. It may be helpful to divide long-term projects into smaller tasks.

7. Encourage children to use a laptop and other digital technologies to increase their motivation and help them to complete assignments quicker. There are many websites (listed at the end of this handout) that offer a variety of homework help, including online-tutors, games, and information on virtually every subject. The brand Leap Frog offers various fun and educational interactive games. The Leapfrog PEN computer includes games such as Leapfrog FLY Memorizer Game, Leapfrog FLY Through Writing, Leapfrog FLY Through Algebra, Leapfrog FLY Through Spelling, Leapfrog FLY Through Math, Multiplication and Division, and so on (<http://www.flypentop.com/view/page.home/home>).
8. Make homework a fun learning experience, rather than a frustrating one. Homework can be a positive time for interacting with your child to share interests and excitement about learning, as well as to model problem-solving strategies. Developing a ritual around completion of each assignment can be rewarding and fun. This could include having a small snack as each assignment is completed, placing the completed assignment in a pile, or checking them off a list. To log homework assignments on the computer, download the Microsoft Office Online Weekly Homework Schedule for Microsoft Word (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/templates/TC060900001033.aspx?CategoryID=CT101172751033>
9. Some children respond well to regular positive feedback and encouragement from their parents while they are doing homework. Use praise and other small rewards for homework effort. You might also let your child play a quick game on the website http://www.teach-nology.com/web_tools/games/ between successfully completing assignments.
10. Model interest in learning and achievement for a child. Schedule a regular time to sit next to the child, each reading a different book, and talk briefly to the child afterwards about what each of you has read. Take your child to the library and encourage the youngster to check out materials or take out books, even if it is simply to look at the pictures. As the child gets older, model your interest in learning by attending courses, reading books, or pursuing hands-on hobbies with the help of books.
11. It is important to be available to assist with homework but not to be responsible for doing it. When you do not know an answer, it may be particularly helpful for your child to work with you to determine an appropriate answer. Should you find your child's homework to be overly frustrating or essentially busy work that takes up too much time, you may wish to speak with the child's teacher to ask that adjustments be made.

12. Check over your child's completed assignments with them. Children need varying levels of guidance at different ages. When they are younger, it may be important to check their work more thoroughly. Provide guidance, but do not do the work yourself. Give praise for completion of work and show interest by asking about assignments and what is being done in the classroom.

Web Sites:

Learning Works for Kids (www.learningworksforkids.com): The premier site for executive-function information, this site provides a wealth of up-to-date tips and recommendations for children with all types of disorders and disabilities.

B. J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helper (<http://www.bjpinchbeck.com/>): This site provides users with more than 240 relevant educational links to English, History, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Foreign Languages.

Homework Spot (<http://www.homeworkspot.com/>): This site offers help in the areas of English, Math, Science, History, Art, Music, technology, foreign language, college prep, health, life skills, extracurricular activities, and more.

Infoplease: Homework Center (<http://www.infoplease.com/homework/>): This site has provided reliable information for homework, through the Internet, to all kinds of factual questions on materials since 1938.

Books:

Canter, Lee and Lee Hausner. (2005). *Homework Without Tears*. New York, NY: HarperCollins, Inc.

Clark, Rosemarie et al. (1999). *The School-Savvy Parent: 365 Insider Tips to Help You Help Your Child*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Glenn, H. S. (1998). *7 Strategies for Developing Capable Students*. Roseville, CA: Prima.

Romain, Trevor and Elizabeth Verdick. (1997). *How to Do Homework without Throwing Up*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Zentall, Sydney and Sam Goldstein. (1998). *Seven Steps to Homework Success: A Family Guide to Solving Common Homework Problems*. Plantation, FL: Specialty Press.