

Homework Help Tips for Parents

Set up a study area.

To do homework successfully, your child must have a quiet place in which to work. The study area must be well-lit, quiet, and have all necessary supplies. A lot of room is not always necessary; the kitchen table or a corner of the living room is fine. Try to keep the study area off-limits to brothers and sisters during homework time.

Create a homework survival kit.

A homework survival kit- combining supplies needed to do homework will prevent your child from being distracted by the need to go searching for supplies, and will free you from last-minute trips to the store for items, such as:

assignment book	presentation folders	tape	ruler
poster board	paper clips	glue	scissors
writing paper	markers	dictionary	compass
index cards	pencils	thesaurus	protractor

Explain to your child that it is his or her responsibility to keep track of the homework survival kit materials that are getting low and need replacing.

Schedule a daily homework time.

Help your child develop good study habits by doing homework at the same time each day. Set a time and explain that your child must do schoolwork. Even when nothing is assigned, your child can do additional practice or reading. During daily homework time all other activities must stop: your child must go to the study area and be productive.

Here's how to introduce a new homework routine:

- Discuss with your child the importance of doing homework at the same time every day.
- Help your child determine a minimum length of time needed to develop good study habits.
- Have your child write down scheduled after-school activities and other responsibilities.
- Decide on the best time to implement a daily homework routine and add it to the schedule.
- Post the schedule in a prominent location and check on your child daily until it has become routine.
- Ask your child regularly to show you what they have accomplished and learned in school.

Encourage your child to work independently.

Homework teaches responsibility. Through independent practice, children learn skills they must develop if they are to become self-reliant, motivated, and successful adults capable of handling a job; how to follow directions, how to start and finish a task, and how to manage time are vital to success. By encouraging your child to work on his or her own, you are helping him or her develop these important life skills.

Help your child set an appropriate pace.

Your child may need extra help to develop the habit of pacing his or herself during daily homework time. A good way to solve this particular problem is the "Beat the Clock" game. First, determine how long it should take to do the tasks at hand; then, set a timer and challenge your child to finish before the alarm sounds. If the work is finished in the given time, be sure to recognize the achievement.

Have your child write important information on index cards.

A supply of 3' x 5' index cards should always be available at home. As your child does homework, he or she should summarize important information on the cards. Later these cards can be used for review.

Help with long-range planning.

Your child needs to learn how to break down big projects into small, easily completed tasks by using a long-range planner or calendar. Demonstrate how to do this and set an early due date for each task leading to a final due date.

Use a proofreading checklist for papers and reports.

Proofreading is an important step in completing any written assignment. You can help your child develop better proofreading skills by providing a checklist. *Ask your child's teachers for help in making a proofreading checklist for papers and reports in each class.* Make copies of these, so there will always be plenty available at home. Explain to your child that each draft of a written assignment should be proofread—not just the final one. Offer to double-check the work after your child has completed the proofreading checklist.

Sample Proofreading Checklist

The criteria on checklists will vary from one class—or even one assignment—to another. *Don't forget to check with each teacher to make sure your child is on the right track!*

- ___ The title of the paper is well-suited to the subject.
- ___ The paper is well-organized, with a clear introduction and statement of purpose (thesis).
- ___ The paper has a good hook that may be revisited in the conclusion to bring the paper full circle.
- ___ Each paragraph has a topic sentence that indicates what the paragraph will be about.
- ___ The paper has specific facts and information that support the writer's claims.
- ___ Descriptive words make the paper more interesting.
- ___ Every sentence is a complete sentence.
- ___ The paper is correctly punctuated and words are spelled correctly.
- ___ The student has done at least two drafts of the paper.
- ___ The student has read the paper aloud for accuracy and flow.

Help your child study, but not "cram" for tests.

Remind your child to schedule time for study throughout the week rather than “cramming” the night before a test and going to class tired. Determine what the test will cover and organize the study materials, then use effective study techniques. For example, review all class notes, 3' x 5' index card notes taken at home, past homework assignments, quizzes, and tests. Make up a list of sample questions that might appear on the test or answer study questions if the teacher has provided them.

Textbook Study Techniques

Have your child follow these steps, in this order:

1. Read all headings and subheadings.
2. Look over all pictures, maps, charts, tables and graphs.
3. Read the summary at the end of the chapter.
4. Read through the study questions listed at the end of the chapter.
5. List any questions you might have about each section of the chapter.
6. Read the chapter fully in order to answer your own questions.
7. Note other important, unanticipated points or unanswered questions.

Deal with homework problems promptly.

Your child may rush through homework in order to talk on the phone, watch TV or get together with friends, but needs to understand that doing homework well is important. When your child does not do his or her best work, recognize portions of the work that have been done well and reiterate or clarify your expectations. Provide additional incentives or consequences as you deem appropriate.

Check on your child's progress often and, if you do nothing else, ASK TO SEE THE WORK!

At first, your child may feel that your desire to see his or her work completed is a violation of trust... you, yourself, may even feel that it is invasive. On the other hand, if you do so regularly, the tension will ease and you will see the quality of the work increase. Remember, asking to see the work gives your child an opportunity to impress you and win your praise. Children crave that attention! If you stick to your guns, after a while you will not have to ask—your child will proudly bring the work to you before you even have the chance.

