

GETTING YOUR CHILD TO DO HOMEWORK

What is Homework?

- Assigning homework serves various educational needs
- It serves as an intellectual discipline, establishes study habits, eases time constraints on the amount of circular material that can be covered in class, and supplements and reinforces work done in school
- In addition it fosters initiative, independence, and responsibility and brings home and school closer together.
- Research in the last decade has focused on the relationship between homework and student achievement and has found that it greatly strengthens the case for homework.

Checklist for Helping Your Child with Homework:

- Many children think of homework as punishment rather than reinforcing the learning done during the school day.
- Although designed to help children develop a sense of discipline and organization, homework can trigger a power struggle between the parent(s) and child.
- Because parents' constant nagging and children's avoidance of homework can generate attitudes towards schoolwork done at home, specific tips on helping children with their homework also helps parents approach this task more positively.

1. *Set a consistent quiet time for children to do their homework.* Parents and children could decide together on a particular time. The length of time should vary with children's ages and amount of work. If a child finishes homework before the allotted time is over, pleasure reading may then be substituted. If a favorite TV show occurs during this time, it can be videotaped and viewed later. Parents can model appropriate behaviors for the child by reading during this quiet time instead of watching TV.

How this helps the child: Child is less likely to rush through homework assignments, television viewing will be controlled.

2. *Help children complete one or two examples in homework, not every problem or question.* When a child turns in homework that

was done accurately, the teacher assumes the child understands the material. IF the child does not really understand the material because the homework was finished by the parent, the child may become frustrated and perform poorly on subsequent assignments.

How this helps the child: Child gets some attention from the parent, but also develops independence in completing projects on his/her own. Teachers see the mistakes a child makes on homework and appropriately charts the child's progress in understanding concepts.

3. *Help children organize a time frame for difficult homework and long-term projects.* Science projects and term papers cannot be done overnight. Help children set up specific goals for such long-term assignments. Difficult homework may require structuring more study breaks, and may need to be done early in the evening when the child is more rested. Help children break projects into smaller steps that don't seem so overwhelming.

How this helps the child: Child learns how to pace himself/herself in relation to ability and goals; learns how to organize time and complete work in stages.

4. *Reduce the stress in a child's life.* Some children have so many extra-curricular activities that they are too tired or too distracted to do homework. Soccer, piano, 4-H and swimming practices are too much for a child who also has homework to complete. One or two extra-curricular activities are usually enough for most children.

How this helps the child: Child learns to avoid burnout and overload; child has enough energy to complete homework accurately, and has some free time to relax.

5. *Recognize the limits of your patience.* If you are constantly irritated with your child because he/she tries several times before spelling a word correctly or has trouble completing a math problem, get help from a tutor or the other parent. Someone from school or the neighborhood could recommend an acceptable tutor. Neither the parent nor the child benefits from tense and negative

feelings that arise from impatient parents trying too hard to help their children with homework.

How this helps the child: Child sees that parents recognize personal strengths and weaknesses; the relationship between parent and child is saved; child performs better on school assignments.

6. *Use a non-threatening approach to homework.* Children make mistakes in homework assignments. Instead of saying “That’s wrong – here’s the right answer,” as the child how she/he got the answer. When the child is asked to explain the thinking process about the answer, he/she often catches the mistakes and becomes less discouraged. Another advantage of using this technique is that parents can discover the mistaken logic behind the incorrect answer.

How this helps the child: Child becomes more secure in his/her own ability; parents are thought of as encouraging and supportive instead of threatening.

7. *Support the teacher.* When you see problems with the amount or type of homework that teachers are assigning, make an appointment with the teacher to discuss the issue. Complaining to the teacher in front of the child can encourage the child to question the teacher’s competence and authority, creating discipline problems in the classroom.

How this helps the child: Child maintains respect for the parent and the teacher’s position; parents and teachers work together to help children learn and grow in a positive direction.

How Much Time Should Your Child Spend on Homework?

- According to some recent research, 2 ways to increase students’ opportunities to learn are to increase the amount of time that students have to learn and to expand the amount of content they receive – homework assignments foster both of these goals.
- According to statements by the National PTA and the National Education Association, the following amounts of homework are recommended:

- Kindergarten to 3rd grade – no more than 20 minutes per day
- 4th to 6th grade – 20 to 40 minutes per day
- 7th to 12th grade – the recommended amount of time varies according to the type and number of subjects a student is taking, generally college bound students receive lengthier and more involved homework than students preparing to enter the workforce immediately after graduation.