

A Parent's Guide: Creating and Reinforcing Positive Homework Skills

Homework Space: Your child should have a designated homework space equipped with a comfortable chair, solid writing surface and good task lighting. This space should have any necessary supplies within easy reach, and be free of clutter or anything that is unnecessary for completing that day's homework tasks. Lastly, make sure the homework space is located in a quiet area away from distractions, but also in close proximity to you/the parent so your child can ask for help when necessary.

Find Your Child's Optimal Homework Routine: Have an after school routine in place. Homework, dinner, bedtime should all be done at roughly the same time each day. For some children, the reward of going out to play will drive their focus, and therefore homework is best done right afterschool. However other children benefit from having a break from school work, and therefore tackling homework after dinner maybe optimal.

Make a Checklist: Before starting homework, help your child write down exactly what they want to accomplish (e.g., complete religion worksheet, read a chapter for social studies, and complete five math problems.) Also help your child learn to prioritize their checklist based on when assignments are due and how much time a given assignment will take.

Break Down Large Assignments/Projects: Children often have difficulty breaking down larger projects into manageable "chunks." Sit down with your child and their planner to develop a homework plan for dividing-up large projects into smaller assignments that can be completed over a period of time.

Maintaining Focus: Help your child maintain focus by studying for blocks of time that are broken-up by regular breaks. The length of the study block should be determined based on the length of time he/she can remain focused. For older students try study blocks of 45 minutes at a time, that are broken-up by 10-15 minute breaks. For younger students you can start with study blocks of 20 minutes, broken-up by 5 minute breaks, and adjust as necessary. (Note: In most cases it is not advisable for students to Facebook or watch television during these short breaks since many students tend to lose track of time and become distracted from their studies.)

Good Sleeping Habits: Making sure your child is getting enough rest each night is important for maintaining their focus and energy level throughout the day. Children should have an established bedtime and routine, which allows wind-down time before sleep and plenty of rest. To help ensure a good night's sleep, avoid caffeine within a few hours before bedtime and stimulating activities (e.g., video games, television, and exercise) within an hour of bedtime.

Resist The Urge to Ensure Homework Is Done "Perfectly": Teachers use homework as a tool for evaluating what concepts your child needs to work on versus what they have already mastered. Although it is important that you make certain that your child

understands the directions and completes their homework, parents should resist the urge to ensure their children's homework is done perfectly. Being able to identify what errors your child is making, allows teachers to take steps to ensure your child has mastered the given skill prior to testing.

Overwhelmed and/or Cannot do the Work: If you find that your child is often overwhelmed by the amount of homework they are bringing home and/or cannot complete their homework without a great deal of assistance from you, it is important that you contact your child's teacher(s) regarding these issues. Children that experience extended periods of high frustration and lack of effectiveness are more likely to lose their desire to learn and suffer from low self-confidence. Therefore it is critical to identify these problems early, understand the reasons behind them, and put supports into place that will allow your child to experience success in the learning process.