

Homework Without Tears

Success Starts with Strong Study Habits

[A Parental Guide to Helping Your Child Build strong Study Habits]

Genevieve Lundberg
Elementary School Counselor
(805) 497-9511 ext. 535

Homework affects achievement in school.

Research tells us that the time spent doing homework directly affects a child's achievement. Students who consistently do homework perform academically better than those who do not do homework. By doing homework, students can improve academic achievement in all subjects. This occurs across all grade levels. Doing homework improves academic achievement of both high and low achievers.

I. How to set up a proper study area

- A. Tell your children they must have a special place where they will do homework. You and your child should choose the location together. Make sure it is some place close where you can be available for help.
- B. Make sure the space is well lit.
- C. Post a "Do Not Disturb" sign during homework time.
- D. Equip your child's workspace with a Homework Survival Kit. This may include crayons, pencils, markers, pencil sharpener, eraser, pens, glue, tape, hole punch, stapler, scissors, dictionary, and a homework planner. If everything is right there at your child's fingertips, the less likely your child will find excuses to get up off of the homework table.

II. How to get homework finished on time.

It is very common for parents to argue with their children over when the homework is to be done each night. Children will try to put it off as long as possible. The battles sometimes last until bedtime and into the next morning. On top of these battles, children are very busy bees. Many children have after school activities, doctor's appointments, or tutoring. Children who have two family homes often have to travel between homes. In order to solve these issues, **homework should be scheduled into your children's lives.**

- A. Daily homework time is a pre-planned time set aside each day during which your children must do their homework. During this

time, all other activities should stop. This includes TV, the phone, and Nintendo.

B. For grades K-3:

Choose the Daily Homework Time for your child.

Select a time when you or another responsible person will be available to assist you child.

Try to schedule the same Daily Homework Time for all of your children.

Write down the homework hours in the designated spaces on the Daily Schedule.

Go over the sheet with your child, explaining what it means.

Post the sheet in a visible place like the refrigerator.

C. For grades 4-6

Decide with your child the homework hours and write them in the Daily Schedule.

Post the Daily Schedule in a visible place like the refrigerator.

D. **If necessary, establish mandatory homework time.**

Mandatory homework time means that children must use their entire scheduled Daily Homework Time for homework, reading, reviewing, or practicing. This helps **speeders** (children who rush to get it over, and it is often incomplete or messy) and **forgetters** (children who “forget” to bring work home or that they had any to do). Mandatory homework time is designed to teach students that there is no advantage to rushing through work or forgetting it altogether. Children learn that their irresponsible approach to homework will not be rewarded with more free time.

What happens if I can't be home during mandatory homework time?

K-3 Explain what mandatory homework time is to the person who supervises your child. If the caretaker cannot do this, schedule it during a time when you will be home.

4-6 Make sure your child knows each day when Daily Homework time begins. Telephone home at the start of

Daily Homework to check to see that your child is working. Have your child leave their homework out for you to review when you get home.

- E. Use the homework planner to check to make sure all of the work is complete. For children who have a tendency to “forget” to write it in their homework planner, you can check with your child’s teacher to see if s/he will initial the planner. This way you can ensure you are seeing the whole picture.

III. How to get your children to do their homework on their own.

- A. Tell your children that you expect them to do homework on their own. This doesn’t happen overnight. This skill must be nurture and encouraged early on.

K-3 Check your child’s homework planner.

If needed, read the directions to the homework together.

Make sure they understand the assignment.

If needed, get your child started by working on the first problem of the question together.

Be available to answer questions and give assistance.

Praise your child’s efforts.

4-6 Check to see that your child is doing homework at the proper time.

Suggest that your child call a friend if he needs help.

Give your child help only after he makes an effort on his own.

Utilize study skills to help your child work independently.

Praise your child’s efforts.

B. Helpful hints to encouragement:

Emphasize your confidence in your children’s ability to do the work with a little boost from you.

Break down the “overwhelming” assignment into simple steps you know your child can do successfully.

Provide encouragement each time the child succeeds at any step. Then have them move forward to complete the assignment.

Once your child begins gaining confidence, have him do a small part of the assignment on his own.

IV. How to motivate your children to do their best work.

- A. Consistently praise your child every day. Don't just save the praise for A's.
- B. Tell your children specifically what you like about what they are doing or what they have done.
- C. A hug or pat on the shoulder increases the messages impact.
- D. Use super praise.
 - a. One parent praises the child for their behavior.
 - b. This parent praises the child in front of the other parent.
 - c. The other parent now praises the child.

V. How to motivate your child to do their best work.

- A. For children where praise is not enough, sometimes we have to use other incentives to get them motivated. An incentive is something that motivates a child into action. Once the children begin working on their own, the rewards can be phased out. It is important to note that rewards do not have to be expensive. More than anything, children want their parents attention. Rewards can be watching their favorite movie together, going and getting an ice cream, or going to the park.
- B. Tell your children that you are going to use some new ideas to help them do their homework.
- C. Choose incentives that your child will appreciate.
- D. Be consistent.
- E. Phase out incentives, but make sure to keep up the praise!

F. Remember giving incentives is your choice. If a child states they won't do their homework unless they get a reward, make sure to lay down the law. "Jamey, doing your homework on your own is your job. Offering you a reward for doing it is my choice. Don't ever get the idea that it's something you have coming to you".

G. Great motivating ideas:

K-3 Beat the Clock
Spinner
Homework Award
Homework Contract

4-6 Trade Off
Chunking
Spinner
Homework Award
Homework Contract

VI. How to communicate assertively

A. Tell your children- clearly and firmly- that you expect them to do their homework responsibly.

B. Don't argue with your children. Use the broken- record technique.

C. Back up your words with actions by:

*Tell your children that the choice is theirs.

*Don't make meaningless threats of punishment.

*Be consistent in following through with your demands.

*Be prepared for your children to test the boundaries.

*Call the school or counselor if your children still will not do their homework.

D. Do not hesitate to talk with your child's teacher if your child cannot do the homework assignments, or does not bring home assigned work. Just make sure to follow through on what you and your child's teacher come up with.