

Seven Steps to Homework Success:

Ways to help your child get the most from homework - and maybe even enjoy it.

By KnowledgePoints

Children who spend more time on homework do better in school and the academic benefits increase as they move into the upper grades. By forming positive homework routines with your child now, you will be preparing him or her for studies in school, college and life.

Here are seven steps to help your child make homework a priority and encourage a lifelong love of learning:

Communicate with Teachers

Parents and teachers who work together provide structure for ensuring the child meets his or her academic goals.

Meet with your child's teacher early in the school year or during your school's open house to discuss grading periods and homework policies. Find out what kind of assignments will be given and how long you should expect your child to spend on homework nightly. Follow up on this meeting with regular phone or email contact throughout the school year.

Review the teacher's expectations with your child and hold the child accountable. If a problem arises, contact the teacher immediately.

Designate a Study Place

Pick a quiet "homework spot" for your child that has limited distractions, ample work space and adequate lighting. Include a shoebox or plastic crate full of necessary supplies, as well as access to necessary resources, such as a computer, dictionary, encyclopedia, thesaurus, globe and maps.

It is also important to schedule a regular study time. Figure out the time your child is best able to concentrate, work it into your schedule and follow it diligently.

Provide Guidance and Support

Your role in your child's homework is to provide guidance and support – not to do the assignments! You won't know if he or she is struggling if you do the work.

In addition, it is important to understand and respect your child's learning style.

- Does your child learn things best when he or she can see them? Drawing a picture or chart may help with some assignments.
- Does your child learn things best when he or she can hear them? Your child may need to listen to a story or have directions read aloud.
- Does your child understand things best when he or she can handle or move them? You may need to have things your child can manipulate.

Put up a calendar and record assignments. This helps your child get used to tracking what is due and when. With visible accountability, the chart will help your child feel good about his or her accomplishments and learn how to manage time.

Check for Understanding

After homework assignments are completed, look over the assignments together and have your child explain what he or she did. This presents an opportunity to provide positive, constructive feedback.

Interactive quizzes and study games take studying to the next level and help ensure your child absorbs what is being studied. Try giving practice tests for memorization assignments or spelling, using flash cards for vocabulary or math facts and playing study games to help your child prepare for a test.

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Show an Interest

The attitude parents express about homework will be the attitude their children develop.

Discuss school and learning activities every day. Getting to know your child's classmates and their parents will help you build a solid network of support. Volunteer in the classroom, at book fairs, science fairs, plays or sporting events. On the weekends, take your child to visit museums, parks, zoos and science centers.

Use Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement helps keep children motivated as they continue to build their self-esteem and become active lifelong learners. Giving constant praise and encouragement will help your child remain positive and focused.

A reward-based motivation system allows your child to earn rewards based on performance and on the effort and completion of homework activities. Great rewards include a night at the movies, dinner at a special restaurant or a new book. Once the rules of your system are in place, be consistent.

Notice Struggles

In order to maximize your child's learning experience, you must be able to detect signs of struggles and frustrations. Learning can't take place if a child is angry or upset over an assignment.

Meet with your child's teacher regularly to discuss any problems you might observe and co-develop a plan of action to remedy the situation. Try to answer the following questions about your child's study behavior: How often is my child struggling with homework? What subject(s) is my child struggling with? Does my child enjoy school and is he or she excited about it?

Use information you have gathered about your child's struggles to find solutions that best meet your child's learning needs. Whether your child struggles with basic skills needed to complete homework assignments, or needs an additional challenge, there are professional tutoring services available in your community with the tools and resources to help your child achieve his or her academic goals.

Homework has the power to bring together children, parents and teachers in a common effort to improve learning. With these seven steps, parents can help build a foundation for success in school.

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2. Designate a Study Place

3. Provide Guidance and Support

4. Check for Understanding

5. Show an Interest

6. Use Positive Reinforcement

7. Notice Struggles

About KnowledgePoints®

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