

Homework: How Parents Can Help

How important is homework for helping children do well in school? And how can busy parents help?

Completing homework on time clearly contributes to school success. It helps reinforce classroom learning and shows teachers that the student wants to succeed. In fact, students who have done poorly in the past do better when parents get involved in helping them get their homework done.

But what is the best way for parents to help?

Helping should begin with an understanding that children are responsible for homework. Parents are there to help them get organized and to encourage them when they get stuck. Parents can do other things to help with homework.

Set a regular study time. Keep your child's attention span in mind—you may need two short periods with a break in between. Check with your child's teacher if you are uncertain about how much time to set aside for study. Make it a regular period, though, with a beginning and an ending time. Pick a time that won't be interrupted by lessons or other activities. If your child finishes before the end of the study time, have him or her spend the rest of the time reading. This will help your child become a better reader and it will reduce the temptation to hurry through assignments.

Provide a quiet place for study. Try to eliminate as many distractions as possible. Some kids work better with a little, low-level background sound. Avoid

having the television on, however. Children don't necessarily need to study in a private space. The kitchen may be a fine place to study, for instance, so long as distractions are kept to a minimum.

Provide basic materials. Pens, pencils, lined paper, pencil sharpener, and so forth are usually all your child will need. In higher grades, your child may need graph paper, a dictionary, and other materials. Expect an occasional trip to the library (for information) or to the store (for supplies).

Help your child get organized to bring home needed materials. Provide either a notebook with dividers and pockets in it or a backpack so your child can reduce the chances of losing papers, notes, or assignments. If getting organized is a problem, involve the teacher. In the earlier grades especially, most teachers are willing to prompt children to take home the required materials.

Have your child write down daily homework assignments. If your school does not have a homework hotline, ask the teacher to check that your child has written a list of assignments at the end of each day.

To find out more about how to become involved in your child's learning—or virtually any topic related to education and raising children, call the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS) toll-free at 1-800/624-9120. We can send you a free ERIC report about homework. To find out more about the ERIC system and its services, call ACCESS ERIC at 1-800/LET-ERIC.

