

Homework:

It's a family concern



Tips for Beating the  
Homework Battle in your  
Household

## A Framework for Homework

Research shows that children who spend more time on homework, on average, do better in school and that the academic benefits increases as children move into the upper grades.

The value of homework extends beyond school. Good assignments completed successfully can help children to develop wholesome habits and attitudes. Homework can help parents learn about their children's education and communicate both with their children and the school. Homework can encourage a lifelong love of learning.

### Why Do Teachers Assign Homework?

- ✓ review and practice what has been learned
- ✓ get ready for the next day's class
- ✓ learn to use resources (libraries, reference material)
- ✓ explore subject more fully than time permits in the classroom
- ✓ completion of class work

Homework can also teach children to work independently, encourage self-discipline and responsibility and encourage a love of learning. Homework is meant to be a positive experience to encourage children to learn. Assignments should not be used as punishment.

### What's the Right Amount of Homework?

20 - 30 minutes

Shared reading, practice spelling and number work

30 minutes

Reading with a written response journal (retell, relate, reflect), review of daily concepts (all areas)

Completion of class work, assignments/projects, review of daily concepts (all areas). Reading with a written response focusing on retell, relate, reflect

Gr. 4 & 5 = 30 - 45 minutes

Gr. 6 = 40 - 60 minutes

Gr. 7 & 8 = 60 minutes up to 120 minutes

## How Parents Can Help With Homework

Show you think Education and Homework are Important

### Set a Regular Time

The best schedule is one that fits your child and your family. Some flexibility may be necessary to accommodate outside activities. Homework must be a high priority and may require limiting outside activities.

### Pick A Place

A good study area should have lots of light, supplies close by and be fairly quiet. Let your child take charge of decorating a pleasant work area.

### Remove Distractions

Turn off the television, radio and CD player. Discourage social telephone calls. Schedule quiet activities for other family members during homework time.

### Set a Good Example

Show your child that the skills he/she is learning are an important part of the things adults do. Read, write do thing that require thought and effort on your part (balancing cheque book, writing reports/letters....).

### Be Involved – Appropriately

Monitor assignments, encourage your child to clarify assignments and due dates, check the Agenda planner daily. Do not do the homework for your child. Give practice test. Talk about assignments. Help your child to avoid plagiarism by giving practice putting information into their own words.

## Monitoring Assignments

- ☺ Know the teacher's expectations
- ☺ Be available
- ☺ Look over completed assignments
- ☺ Monitor TV viewing (limit the time)

## Providing Guidance

- ☺ Figure out how your child learns best (seeing, hearing, doing?) (alone, with a buddy?)
- ☺ Help your child get organized (regular time, visible calendar, organized desk area?)
- ☺ Encourage Good Study Habits (structuring time and tasks to complete projects/ study for tests, reading instructions several times.....)
- ☺ Talk about the assignment (break it down into small, workable parts, gather necessary materials)
- ☺ Give praise (praise for good work and constructive criticism for work that is not their best)

### When to Contact the Teacher

- ✓ Your child refuses to do an assignment despite your best effort to prod and encourage
- ✓ Instructions are unclear
- ✓ You can't seem to help your child get organized to finish the assignment
- ✓ You can't provide the needed supplies or materials
- ✓ Neither you nor your child can understand the purpose of the assignment
- ✓ Assignments are often too hard or too easy
- ✓ Homework is assigned in uneven amounts (e.g. None on Mon, Tue, Wed, but many assignments on Thursday with a short due date)
- ✓ Your child has missed school and needs to make up assignments

### Communication Tips

-  Communicate with the teacher before problems arise.
-  Contact the teacher as soon as you suspect your child has a homework problem.
-  Don't go straight to the principal without giving the teacher a chance to work out the problem with you and your child.
-  Approach the teacher with a cooperative spirit. Problems can't be solved if teachers and parents view each other as enemies.
-  If you have a complaint, try not to put the teacher on the defensive.
-  Let the teacher know if your child is bored with assignments or finds them too hard or too easy. Teachers want to assign homework that children enjoy and complete successfully and they welcome feedback from parents. Remember that teachers do not have time to tailor homework to the individual needs of each student night after night and not all homework can be expected to interest your child or be perfectly suited.
-  Make sure communication is clear. Listen to the teacher and don't leave until you're sure about what's been said.

### Tips for Parents: Using Praise and Rewards

#### **Praise...**

Praise often! Don't be stingy with praise!!

Praise your child at least 10 times per day! ( It might feel awkward at first, but soon it will be second nature!)

Praise your child as soon as you see the behavior you are interested in.

When praising children, follow the IFEEED Rules:

Immediate - provide praise immediately after the appropriate behavior

Frequent - provide praise as frequently as possible

Eye contact - make eye contact with the child

Enthusiastically - be enthusiastic when praising

Descriptive - describe specifically the behavior that you are praising

### **Rewards...**

#### **Many Types of Rewards can be Used:**

- Physical and Verbal Rewards
  - Powerful and effective at strengthening appropriate behavior
  - Easy to implement
  - Examples:
    - Smiles
    - Hugs
    - Kisses
    - Words of praise
- Activity Rewards
  - Doing something that your child really likes to do
  - Example
    - Playing a game
    - Reading a story
    - Going for a walk
- Tangible Rewards (should be combined with other rewards such as praise)
  - Stickers
  - Candy
  - Small toys

#### **Reminder when Using Rewards:**

- ✓ Make sure you provide the reward as soon as possible after the behavior is displayed
- ✓ Rewards should be specific, special, and immediately available
- ✓ Rewards should be things the child is not able to get all of the time

### **Motivating Your Child...**

#### **Make Motivation Fun!!**

Unique ways to provide motivation and frequent recognition for positive behavior:

- ✓ Grab Bags:

When the child has met a preset goal they are allowed to pick from a bag containing 15-20 small pieces of paper with rewards written on them.

✓ Chart Moves:

Every time a child completes a certain task they are able to connect a dot on a dot-to-dot picture. At certain points the child is able to receive a reward. This allows the student to track their progress and determines when rewards will be given. Chart moves can increase good behavior and help the child become more aware of his/her own behavior.

✓ Reward Menus

The adult and child jointly select items to be used as rewards for appropriate behaviors. Rewards should not cost a lot of money, not take a lot of time, and should be natural whenever possible.

References

Clark, L. (1996). SOS: Help for parents (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Berkeley, CA: Parents Press.

Jenson, W.R., Rhode, G, & Hepworth, M. (2003). The tough kid parent book.

Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

## Preparing for Spelling Quizzes

Help your child prepare for weekly spelling quizzes with these tips!

### **Give your child a pre-test:**

- When your child brings home their list of spelling word, sit them down with a pencil and paper for a practice quiz.
- Don't have them copy the words or sentences. Children learn how to spell words by visualizing them in their minds, not by copying them. Simply, say each word in a sentence out loud for your child to write down.
- Try to give the pre-test in exactly the same way that the teacher would give the actual test. Have your child correct the pre-test. They should study only the words they have misspelled.

### **Then, teach your child how to spell the words he spelled incorrectly on his pre-test:**

- Have them say the word while looking at it.
- Tell them to close their eyes, try to see the word, and then spell the word out loud.
- Have them look at the written word to see if they spelled it out loud correctly.
- Ask them to look at the word, then cover the word and have them write it.
- Finally, ask them to check to see if they wrote the word correctly. If the word is misspelled, all four steps should be repeated before moving on to the next word.

Once your child has learned to use this technique, he will be able to study his spelling words independently. On the night before the test, give them a final test of all the words.

## **Tips for Helping Your Kids Handle Homework**

How much homework should your child bring home? According to veteran teachers Peggy Gisler and Marge Eberts, a popular guideline for assigning homework is about 10 minutes each night for first grade, plus an additional 10 minutes for each successive grade. That's 10 minutes for a first-grader, 30 minutes for a third-grader, and 70 minutes for a seventh-grader. While guidelines are a good idea, remember that teachers do assign work at different rates, depending on what they're doing in the classroom.

Giving students an excessive amount of homework in the early grades can turn them away from learning. It also robs young kids of the chance to do other activities after spending six or more hours on academic work in the classroom. It's only when kids reach sixth grade that the amount of homework they do is directly related to how well they achieve in school. Before then, the effect of homework on achievement is almost nonexistent.

If you're concerned about homework, the best approach is to work through the parent-teacher organization to have the school establish a homework policy.

As far as taming the homework monster goes, it's said that the best defense is a good offense. In this case, that means organization and good study habits! The following tips will help your child stay on top of his or her assignments.

- #1. Have them use an assignment notebook, so he knows what homework is required each day
- #2. Introduce a planning calendar and show them how to use it when they begin to have long-term assignments.
- #3. Your child should preview their assignments each day, and decide the order in which they will do them. It's best to get the tougher tasks out of the way first!
- #4. Teach them to review their work frequently
- #5. Get them an organizer, and show them how to organize all their school papers.
- #6. Have them use a book bag to transport books and papers.
- #7. Encourage them to establish a regular time for doing homework.
- #8. They should keep old quizzes and tests to prepare for future tests.
- #9. Eliminate distractions like phone calls, and television during homework time.
- #10. Establish a regular place for doing homework.