

Homework Help

“Why do I have to do homework?”

This is one time when answering a question with a question can work. Ask your child why she does soccer drills or practices her trumpet. Explain, “Homework helps you do better in school, the same way that practicing soccer helps you play better in games.”

Use this guide to help your youngster get the most out of homework—and put an end to homework battles.

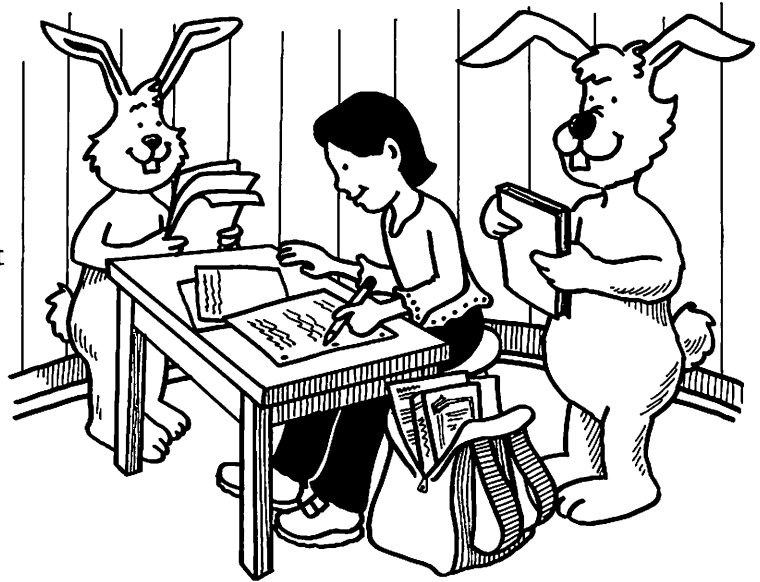
Developing a homework routine

The way you approach your child’s homework sends an important message. Show her that homework is important by giving it a regular time slot, helping her choose the best way to work, and teaching her to organize assignments and supplies. Here are some tips:

- Does your youngster need playtime before settling into homework, or does she prefer getting her work done right after school? Try each way for a week, and keep track of the results (how long her homework takes, her mood, how well she does her work). Together, decide which time slot works best.
- Let your child experiment with work conditions, too. Some children concentrate better in silence, while others need background noise such as soft music. If your youngster has trouble paying attention at the kitchen table, let her try stretching out on the family room floor.
- Keep school supplies in a basket or shoe box, stored in a handy spot. When it’s homework time, your child can grab the container and get started. Include pencils, paper, crayons, markers, ruler, scissors, glue, and other items she might need like a calculator and dictionary.
- Be sure your youngster has a plan for bringing home papers and books. You might get her a special folder (*example*: her favorite color) where she can put assignments as they’re given. Before leaving school, she can look through the folder and take the books she needs.



- Encourage your child to use a calendar to keep track of assignments. Have her list her subjects (reading, math, social studies, science) on each weekday and write in homework and projects. Crossing off completed items will give her a sense of accomplishment.



Playing a supporting role

To get the most out of homework, your youngster needs to do it himself. If you provide too many answers, teachers won’t know where your child needs help. But you can offer the support he needs. Try these ideas:

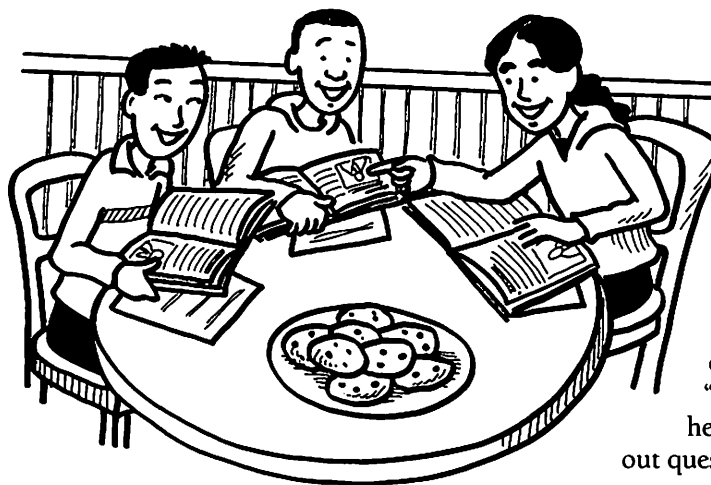
- Go over the instructions. Have your youngster explain the directions to you before he begins so you can make sure he understands them.
- If he gets stuck, ask questions that will lead him to an answer. For instance, if he asks, “Where was George Washington born?” you might say, “Let’s read the chapter headings together and see if you can find out.” For an essay assignment, have him talk his ideas over with you before he starts writing.
- Review homework after your child finishes, and check to make sure his work is neat and complete. If he does his homework in after-school child care or with a sitter, set aside a time to go over it later.
- Help your youngster set priorities. You might encourage him to do his hardest assignments first, when he is most focused. If he has a spelling quiz Friday, have him review his words each day and allow extra study time Thursday.



continued

■ When your child has a large project, help him break it into smaller pieces. Suggest that he write down each step and hang the list in his room. For a science project, he might spend two days choosing an idea, a week doing the experiment, and another week writing up his lab report.

Tip: If your youngster is struggling with assignments, contact his teacher. Together, you can come up with suggestions to help him.



project about the main character.

■ Involve the whole family. Hold a geography bee when your youngster has to memorize names of continents and oceans. Make your child the host of a family game show where “contestants” answer questions he poses. *Note:* Have him write out questions and answers first so he gets extra practice.

Breaking up boredom

Your child may never love homework, but there are ways to make it more fun. Consider these ideas:

■ Encourage your youngster to start a homework group. Working with friends is not only more entertaining, it can increase understanding. Suggest that they take turns explaining math problems or quizzing each other on vocabulary words. When your child teaches others, he boosts his own skills.

■ Help your child bring out his creative side. For example, he might write a poem about rainbows using a different color ink for each line. Or he could turn a book report into a scrapbook

■ Plan study breaks, especially when your youngster is working on long or tough assignments. Suggest working for 30 minutes, then taking a 10-minute break to walk around the block or read a comic book.

■ Go somewhere else. You might head to the library, a coffee shop, or even a quiet corner in the park to do homework. A new environment can provide a welcome change of pace.

■ Celebrate success. When your youngster finishes writing a report on tigers, take a family trip to the zoo. He can see the subject of his hard work up close!

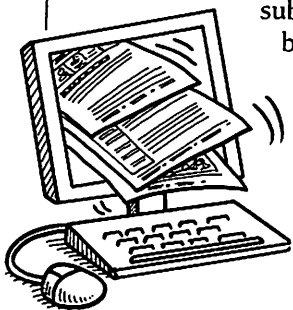


Online homework help

How can your child find answers when she's stumped? Help may be as close as a computer screen. Here are a few places to try.

Yahoo! Kids School Bell • <http://kids.yahoo.com/directory/School-Bell>

Yahoo's School Bell contains links for language arts, science and nature, math, and social studies. Students can submit questions to be answered, learn songs to help them memorize multiplication tables and parts of speech, and read about cultures, governments, and flags.



Fact Monster Homework Center • www.factmonster.com/homework

Find help for most school subjects here. Your child can read biographies of famous people, study with math flashcards, and use reference materials (dictionary, encyclopedia, almanac, atlas).

Kids Kconnect • www.kidskconnect.com

Featuring an alphabetized list of hundreds of topics, this site is a great place to start for reports and projects. Students will find information about people, animals, and more.

B. J. Pinchbeck's Homework Helper • www.bjpinchbeck.com

This site contains dozens of links to resources ranging from All Living

Things to Webster's Dictionary. Or your youngster can click on a school subject, like social studies or art, and find information from the U.S. Census Bureau Map Finder or the Artcyclopedia art gallery.

Kid Info • www.kidinfo.com/School_Subjects.html

Children can choose from a list of school subjects to find helpful links. At Language Arts, they'll learn how to write a good letter or find favorite authors on the Web. In the math section, kids can play games to reinforce basic skills, try mind-bending brain-teasers, and create five different types of graphs. This site also features history, geography, health, science, and more.

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