

It's Time to Do Your Homework!

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Why does this happen so often? You say, "It's time to do your homework," and your child says, "I don't have any." You're not alone if you and your child find homework time to be a stressful part of the day.

It's useful to think about why teachers give homework. It's a way for children to learn responsibility, and develop and practice skills. It's also a good way for parents to be involved in their child's education. Teachers use homework as a diagnostic tool to understand a child's strengths and weaknesses. This is why it's important for parents not to do a child's homework for them. Children become more competent when they learn how to plan and complete a task and follow directions.

Here are some strategies your family can use to stay on track with homework:

1. Have a family meeting to establish homework guidelines. Involve your child in setting up the limits and rules. Some questions to consider are:
 - Who does your child like to get help from?
 - What environment and room does he work best in?
 - What time of day is best?
2. Write down the agreements so everyone is clear about the homework routine. It can be changed for special occasions, but stick to it as much as possible.
3. Set aside a quiet time for everyone in the family to decrease distractions. If the television is on, it's hard to concentrate.
4. If children are hungry they have a harder time concentrating. Offer a healthy snack.
5. Organize supplies and have them easily accessible. A big box with everything your child will need works well.
6. Give positive feedback when you see your child doing well. "Maria, your handwriting is really getting easy to read. Good work."
7. Don't criticize and yell when children make mistakes. If there's a regular problem, talk to the teacher for advice. Some children need to be evaluated for learning problems.
8. Pay attention to your stress level and be patient. After a long day of school and work, everyone is tired.
9. If your child gets frustrated easily, he may want to do his homework at the kitchen table to be near you. Help him get started and then step away to let him work on his own. Some children need more help than others, so respect different learning styles.
10. If there's frequent complaining, evaluate the homework to see if it's too hard. Keep the fun things like playing with friends or computer time for after the homework is done. This offers an extra incentive to complete the work.

For most children, homework is harder now than when you were in school. If you can't help your child with their work, don't be embarrassed. Talk with the teacher about a tutor, and offer encouragement.

