

Helping Students Complete Homework

A Checklist for Parents

Dragging children away from the television to do homework can be a trying experience. But with a little creativity, you can help your child overcome homework anxiety. Here are seven ways to help your child focus on homework:

- Designate a location for doing homework. Find a quiet area of your house, perhaps a desk in his room or a corner in the family room. Ensure that the area is well lit and far from distractions such as a television, computer, or phone.
- Put together a homework kit. Make sure you keep homework supplies near your child's desk or homework space. Get a range of supplies such as pencils, a dictionary, a thesaurus, glue, scissors, construction paper and colored pencils. Being organized helps a child begin homework immediately instead of searching for supplies.
- Find appropriate background music. Studies show that listening to soft classical music can actually help a child concentrate better. Help your child choose instrumental music to listen to while doing homework.
- Establish a routine. Talk to your child about her daily activities and make a schedule with allotted time for homework, time for extracurricular activities, and time for fun. Involving your child in making a schedule helps her manage her time instead of procrastinating.
- Think about multimedia alternatives. Consider buying audio textbooks where children can listen instead of reading. Another possible resource is online textbooks. These alternatives may make homework more interesting for your child.
- Show your child homework is important. Discuss the importance of homework as a family. Ask your children not to distract each other while they are doing homework. Help younger children make a "do not disturb" sign. They can decorate the sign and put it up when they begin their homework. This demonstrates that homework is a serious task.
- Encourage taking breaks. Children are likely to be more productive if they take a break after about 20 minutes. Children should not feel overwhelmed while doing homework. Allow children to take breaks, and eventually they will develop their own pace of study.

5 Tips to Create the (Near) Perfect Homework Environment

The mind of a child is like a sponge. Children absorb what is around them. Sometimes this is good, and sometimes this is not so good. When children are learning and taking in everything around them, it is understandable that they need to have a near-perfect environment to have an optimal learning experience. We use the phrase near-perfect environment because what may be the perfect environment for one child may not be the perfect environment for another child. We are all different people with different personalities and different learning styles. The following suggestions may be used in part or in whole. Here are some tips to help you in creating the near-perfect homework environment.

- Create the atmosphere – Children can sometimes be very easily distracted, which highlights the importance of having an optimal homework environment. Make sure it is a simple, well-lit area with no distractions. Make it a rule - no noise, no toys, and no extraneous activities around them, which often translates into no homework problems.
- Allow for space/breaks – When children get off the bus, they need a break. And why not? They have had to stay focused all day at school. Build it into their routine to allow them to rest before a child does anything. If they are rested, children are more inclined to stay focused and more likely to enjoy their homework. A rested brain means the brain is ready to work and is in “absorption” mode, not recovery-and-spent mode.
- Make sure the child is well fed – Food is something we all need. Having a child who is well fed will help the child work better. The human body simply cannot function properly without proper nutrition. Healthy meals and snacks help a child’s learning go a long way.
- Be organized – Being well organized is a sure way to have your child succeed in his or her studies. Have a homework caddy easily accessible so when the child is ready to start working, everything is ready to go, and there is no need to search for anything, which may cause a child to become distracted.
- Be available – Children may not want an adult right next to them while they are working, but it is important for them to know that you are available if they need you. Using phrases like, “It looks like you have worked really hard on that sentence” instead of empty praise such as, “You are the best at writing sentences” will help them realize their work is important.

These are just a few tips to help you create the near-perfect homework environment for your child. Start with these tips, and then observe your child doing his or her homework. You may also want to spark up a casual conversation with your child about what he or she does and doesn’t like about homework. Based on the answers, try to accommodate and make homework something your child enjoys.