

PARENT CORNER

The Importance of Homework

By Patricia von Oelhoffen

// **What . . . now?!?**
It'll have to wait . . . I made plans with my friends!
Can't I do it in the morning?
Can you help me?"

Many of us can relate to our children's lack of enthusiasm for homework. Still, we know that by completing homework and turning it in on time, students improve academically and learn important lessons about discipline, responsibility, and communication. We can reassure them that having homework does not mean they have to forego fun and relaxation. By planning after school activities around homework and keeping to a schedule, children can maintain a positive balance.



Photo: Jennifer Padua

▷ Megan Kahalehili's study space is comfortable, quiet, and has good lighting and a worktable.

Students look to parents and other caregivers as role models. When we show that we value education and emphasize the importance of homework, we help children succeed. Younger students are more likely to complete homework successfully when guided and monitored by parents. How closely they should be monitored depends on age, independence, and how well they do in school.

Helping with homework means supporting our children, not doing it for them. They will not gain confidence in their own abilities unless they complete the work themselves. Support your children by helping them get organized. With your guidance, they will develop study skills like time management and use of resources. You can also help by discussing the assignment with them. Do they understand what they are supposed to do and how to do it? Do they have the necessary supplies? See the sidebar for more detailed guidelines.

Those who do not know a subject well or for whom English

is a second language may be reluctant to help. But even if you are not comfortable with some subjects, you can show interest and applaud students' efforts.

It is important that you form and maintain positive relationships with teachers, counselors, and school administrators throughout the school year. Ongoing communication is vital in resolving homework and other concerns. By contacting children's teachers early in the school year, you can share important information about any special circumstances, and your children will benefit from your understanding of teaching methods, expectations, and types and purposes of assignments.

If your children are having difficulty, discuss problems with teachers before they become too big. Is homework too hard? Do your children need extra help? Are the purpose or instructions of assignments unclear to you? Once you identify the problem, you can work with the teacher, a counselor, or an administrator to find a solution. Summarize conversations to make sure all parties agree. Follow up to make sure the approach you agreed to is working.

It's our job as parents and caregivers to support children's desires to learn and grow. You can show your interest in them by making their activities the focus of family conversations, attending school activities, and volunteering. Your interest and encouragement will provide an added incentive to do their homework, learn, and excel – not only in education, but in other aspects of their life as well.

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A Parent's Guide to Homework

Schedule a regular homework time. Allow for a relaxation break after school, but do not let children leave homework until just before bedtime when they are likely to be tired, grouchy, and unable to concentrate.

- Help elementary school students set a schedule. Older students can set their own schedules, but make sure these are workable.
- Allow time for sports or other activities, but cut back if more homework time is needed.
- Provide a homework area that has good lighting, is comfortable, and is fairly quiet. If possible, supply a desk or worktable.
- Eliminate distractions by making the telephone, television, video games, and music off limits.
- Provide homework supplies and hold students responsible for keeping them organized.

Resources are available for families that need assistance in purchasing supplies. A teacher, school counselor, or principal can provide referrals.