

## CREATE BETTER STUDY HABITS

Here are some ways you can make your household a better place for your kids to study.

Establish a routine. Set aside a specific time every day for your kids to do homework—perhaps while you are preparing dinner, or right after dinner. Throughout the week, check in with your kids about their assignments. When the time and check-in become routine, it's much easier to keep tabs on the general workflow, so you don't end up facing that last-minute frenzy.

Identify trouble areas. When you sit down with your kids, ask them to show you the types of assignments they're working on and to tell you about the areas where they might be having difficulty. Once you identify problems, you can work together to find any resources they need to create work that will make them (and you) proud.

Create a positive environment. It's no secret that when faced with a choice between homework and TV or Xbox, most kids will ditch their homework every time. That's why it's so important to give your kids the right work environment—turn off electronic devices and help them learn to study in a quiet, focused space. Designate a specific area of your house for studying: choose a well-lit space and keep this area free from clutter so there is plenty of room for books and papers.

Set up a study group. Kids are social creatures, so a peer group can be a powerful incentive for studying. Consider starting a study group that meets a few times a week for your kids and their friends. Food always helps. If you can make learning fun, then students will be more likely to want to learn.

## HELPFUL PARENT WEB LINKS

My Skills: [www.myskillstutor.com](http://www.myskillstutor.com)  
Homework: [homework-help.aol.com](http://homework-help.aol.com)  
math: [nvlm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html](http://nvlm.usu.edu/en/nav/vlibrary.html)  
social studies: [www.socialstudiesforkids.com](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com)  
[www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com)  
science: [www.chem4kids.com](http://www.chem4kids.com)  
[science.nasa.gov](http://science.nasa.gov)  
English: [www.webenglishteacher.com](http://www.webenglishteacher.com)

# STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS: HELPING STUDENTS ACHIEVE

Prepared by the Staff of the  
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Suggestions contained herein were modified and adapted from:

- Maine Department of Education
- No Child Left Behind Act
- National Education Association
- National Parent Teacher Organization

## **HELP YOUR CHILD GET THE MOST OUT OF HOMEWORK**

Many kids try to avoid homework, but research shows that students who spend time on regularly assigned, meaningful homework, on average do better in school. In addition, the academic benefits of homework increase as kids move into the upper grades. Families play an important role in this. Together with teachers, families can help kids develop good study habits and attitudes to become lifelong learners.

### **Why do teachers give homework?**

Teachers use homework:

- to help students understand and review work that has been covered in class;
- to see whether students understand the lesson; and
- to help students learn how to find and use more information on a subject.

Homework is also a link between school and home that shows what kids are studying.

Research shows that when homework is turned in, graded, and discussed with students, it can improve students' grades and understanding of schoolwork.

### **How much time should my children spend each night on homework?**

Most educators agree that homework is most effective within time limits:

- for children in grades K-2, no more than 10-20 minutes a day;
- children in grades 3-6, can handle 30-60 minutes a day;
- in middle and high school, the amount of homework will vary by subject.

Most older students will also have projects, such as research papers and oral reports, with deadlines weeks away. They may need help from parents to organize projects and plan work times to make sure projects are ready to turn in on time.

Teachers can tell you how much time they expect students to spend on homework. Parents should check whether the homework is meaningful and whether over a period homework is assigned in all of the student's subjects.

### **Can my kids do homework listening to music or watching TV?**

- Some students seem able to work with a radio or stereo on, while others must work in silence.
- Television can be a big problem. Many teachers ask that the television be turned off while children are doing homework.
- Research shows that American children on average spend far more time watching television than they do completing homework.
- Although it's worth noting that television can be a learning tool, it's best to leave the television off during homework time.

### **How much help should I give?**

This depends on your student's grade level and study habits. Younger students often need extra homework help.

- First, make sure the child understands the directions.
- Do a few problems together, then watch your child do a few.
- When your child is finished, check the work.
- Praise right answers, and show how to correct mistakes.
- Avoid doing your children's homework for them. Teachers need to see where your children are having trouble.

One of the most helpful things you can do is to show your kids that you think homework is important. Typically kids do their homework while their parents are at work. When you get home, ask to see homework and discuss it with your kids. Ask questions and be supportive.

### **What if I don't understand my child's assignment?**

Today kids may be taking subjects that you never had or that you didn't like when you were in school. You can still help by praising their progress, getting help from a public library or talking with teachers.

You don't have to be an expert in a subject to help with homework.

### **Do teachers really want me to ask them questions about homework?**

Teachers want kids to learn and they want families to be involved.

- Meet each of your teachers and ask what kind of homework will be given. This is very important, even if you have kids in middle or high school.

- Ask what books your student will be using, what kinds of assignments will be given, and when the teacher is available if you have questions.
- Stay in touch with teachers, so they can ease your worries, offer their own homework tips and give you ideas on how you can help your students.

### **One of my kids tries hard but still has problems with homework. What can I do to help?**

There could be a number of reasons for this.

- Suggest that the student ask the teacher for extra help before or after school.
- Tell your student it is good to ask the teacher about homework or anything else he or she doesn't understand.
- Set a time to meet with the teacher to discuss the problem. You may need to meet again during the year to check on how your student is doing.
- If your student understands the work but is still having trouble, ask for a meeting with the teacher so the two of you should work out a plan to meet your student's needs.

Bucksport Schools offer after-school programs with late bus transportation for students needing assistance. Contact the principal for details.

### **My child seems bored by homework. Is this normal?**

It's normal for students not to want to do their homework.

- But if your child always seems bored or unhappy, first you should try to find out the reason by talking with your child.
- Then talk with the teacher to come up with a solution. Teachers want students to learn from homework. Tell the teacher if your child thinks the homework is too easy or too hard. This will help the teacher match homework with your child's ability and maturity levels.

### **When I ask my children if they have homework, they say that it's finished or that they don't have any. How do I make sure they're really doing their work?**

- Make studying, not just homework, a daily habit. Students can always review lessons, read a book, or work on practice exercises during quiet time, even if they don't have homework.

- Ask younger children to show you their homework so that you can check it, sign it, and date it. Teachers like to see that adults have checked children's homework.
- If your children often have no homework to do, you should let their teachers know.
- Don't ask your children if they have homework each night — assume that they always have homework or studying to do.

### **What if my child still isn't turning homework in?**

- Make it very clear to your child that you expect homework to be done and turned in.
- Let your child know you will not tolerate irresponsible behavior about homework.
- Don't wait until grades come out to find out if the problem has been solved. You may need weekly contact with the teacher until the student develops new habits.

### **Should I reward my kids for doing homework or for getting good grades?**

Kids like to know when they've done a good job, and your approval means a lot.

- Praise your kids' work often. Show pride when your kids do their best, no matter what grades they get.
- Be careful about giving money or gifts as rewards. Most teachers want parents to reward good work in other ways. For example, you could plan a special family activity as a reward.

### **How else can I help?**

- Send your kids to school each day, well-rested, fed and with a positive outlook.
- Take an active interest in your kids' schooling. Ask specific questions about what happens at school each day and how your kids feel about it.
- Try not to let any of your own negative experiences keep you from supporting and encouraging your kids' learning. Let them know how much you care about education by continuing your own learning both informally and formally, to impress its importance upon them.

## AVOIDING POWER STRUGGLES ABOUT SCHOOL

By Harriett Romo and Toni Falbo

Most youth begin to assert their independence as they become teenagers. They spend more time with friends than with family. They learn to drive. They have more freedom, and parents have less control. Still, these are times when parents must continue to monitor their children.

The following strategies were used successfully by parents of middle and high school students.

### Be firm about your expectations.

Your child's friends may not have the same rules that your child has and their parents may not monitor their children as closely as you do. Parents have to be firm about their expectations in the face of negative comparisons with friends' parents. If possible, get to know the families of your child's close friends and talk about rules and expectations. Teens from families experiencing serious problems, such as illness, divorce, or separations may have little parental supervision and may look to friends more than family for advice. Teens may be angry about close monitoring by their parents, but in the long run, they appreciate the fact that their parents spend their time and attention keeping track of them.

### Keep up with school assignments.

Parents should visit the school and talk with teachers. A parent who knows when school assignments are due can help the child plan out a schedule for completing the work. While the student should take responsibility for completing the assignment, parents can help the teen learn how to tackle large projects.

### Review homework regularly.

Parents can learn a lot when they review their teen's homework. They can add to school learning by finding videos, magazines, or library books on related subjects. Parents can talk to the teen about the topic. Monitoring homework also helps parents know the level of work their child is expected to do, whether the work is completed on time, and whether the work shows the teen's best effort.

## HOMEWORK HINTS

- ✓ Assume that your kids will have studying to do every night.
- ✓ Ask your kids if they understand their homework. If they do not, work a few examples together.
- ✓ Ask your kids to show you their homework after the teacher returns it, to learn where they're having trouble and where they're doing well.
- ✓ Stay in touch with your kids' teachers. Ask about their classes and what they are studying. Ask teachers how you can support what they are studying in school.
- ✓ Remember, you and teachers want the same thing — to help your kids learn.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to get in touch with a teacher if you and your child don't understand an assignment or if your child is having a great deal of trouble. Almost all parents run into these problems, and teachers are glad to help.
- ✓ Don't do your kids' work for them. Help them learn how to do it themselves.
- ✓ Show your kids that you think homework is important. If you are at work during homework time, ask to see their work when you get home.
- ✓ Praise your kids for doing well. Make praise a habit.
- ✓ Help older kids organize their assignments by recording due dates on calendars or planners.