

Homework Tips for Parents

Identifying Where the Problems Begin, and Identifying Solutions

- Does your child get the assignments written down?
 - If not, work with your child's teacher to check his homework planner to be sure assignments are there before he leaves class.
- Does your child lose his homework planner?
 - Purchase extra ones at the beginning of the school year so there can be quick replacements.
- Does your child forget to bring home the materials needed to do homework?
 - The school can often provide an extra set of textbooks, if this is a chronic problem. Or it may be worth the cost of buying used textbooks to have a set at home and avoid conflicts about what is left at school.
 - Having a supply of poster board, folders, note cards, and other common school materials will prevent late-night runs to purchase last-minute supplies.
- Does your child have difficulty starting his homework?
 - See the tips starting in the next column.
- Does your child have difficulty staying focused?
 - See the tips starting in the next column.
- Does your child do the homework but forget to turn it in?
 - At the end of homework time, help him organize his notebook and backpack for easy identification of assignments to be turned in.
 - Put the backpack by the front door ready to go in the morning.
 - Still forgetting? Talk with the teacher about extra help at school to turn in the homework.

Strategies for Helping Your Child

- Make sure your child has the phone number of at least one student in each of his classes to call for clarification of any assignments. Many schools have a homework hotline or an Internet site for checking homework assignments. Use them!
- Establish a routine and schedule homework for a specific time and place. Choose a quiet location where you can monitor the level of effort. The more predictable and consistent homework time is for a child, the easier it will be to get it done.
- Set up a special space to do homework *with your child*. Some children like a little office set up with their supplies.
- Assist your child in getting started on an assignment. You may need to help your child break down complex instructions into simple steps.
- Set a kitchen timer and have your child work consistently for short bursts of time. Give praise and rewards for consistent effort and work during these periods. This will help decrease procrastination and teach good work skills.
- Assist your child in starting long-term assignments by dividing them into smaller steps. Schedule when each step should be started and completed in the homework planner. Get started immediately so the project does not feel too big to ever get done.
- Praise your child when he or she puts forth good effort or completes a task.
- Consider using a contract or token system, with your child earning rewards for completion of tasks.
- Do not do your child's homework with or for him. Your job is to provide the structure and feedback, not do the work. If you are always doing the homework with your child, you will be preventing him or her from learning how to work independently. (Reading together can be very useful and is an exception. It can also be very rewarding to your child.)

- The last activity of homework time should always be cleaning out the notebook and backpack and organizing the material so it can easily be found the next day. Consider special folders for homework or color-coded sections. Figure out what will help your child stay organized and do it daily.
- Create a designated area with a hook for the backpack by the front door ready to go in the morning.
- Create a checklist for your child to follow, listing what he needs to bring to school and place by the front door ready to go.
- If your child is bringing home incomplete class assignments to do at home, meet with the teacher to request these problems be addressed in school with a behavioral intervention plan. These additional makeup assignments can push a child over the edge at homework time.
- Know when to ask your physician for help. Contact your physician if your child is regularly having major meltdowns at homework time. The timing, duration, and type of medication may need to be reevaluated.

Asking for Help

- Know when to ask the teacher for help.
 - If your child is spending much longer than other students in his grade on homework, you may need to ask for some modifications in the homework assignments such as shorter assignments or flexible due dates.
- Know when to get a tutor. Sometimes a neutral person will be far more successful in helping your child learn content than you will be. Many schools have peer tutoring programs that are free.

Adapted from CHADD's Parent to Parent Program and from Rief S. *The ADD/ADHD Book of Lists*.

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Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Need more information? Contact CHADD at www.chadd.org or CHADD's National Resource Center on ADHD at www.help4adhd.org.

CHADD

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