

Homework Tips for Parents

(Ideas taken from HOMEWORK WITHOUT TEARS by Lee Canter)

What to do when my child doesn't do his/her best work?

1. Tell your child what you expect. Sloppy work with a lot of mistakes is not acceptable.
2. Compliment your child when he does his best work.
3. Have a specific time each day set aside for homework. Post the schedule for all to see and respect. Let your child know that he is to spend the entire scheduled time for homework or other academic activities. If assigned homework is completed and there is time left, that time is to be devoted to such activities as review, library book reading, or practicing math facts.
4. Talk with your child when deciding on a specific homework time. Together discuss when your child works best: after a snack and some time to unwind or immediately after arriving home. Including your child in this decision making process can increase his responsibility toward following through with homework.
5. Think creatively. If homework is given on Friday for the next week, one option is to complete the homework over the weekend. Another option is to get up early each school morning and complete homework for the day.
6. Provide incentives IF NEEDED. Example: When your homework time is finished and all work is successfully completed, you may go outside to play or you may ask a neighbor friend over.

Tip to develop independence: Together, choose an example of his best homework assignment. Hang it in a prominent place and encourage him to compare the work he is doing with the example of his best work so he can decide if he needs to make improvements.

What to do if my child fails to bring assignments home?

1. From the beginning tell your child that you expect all homework assignments as well as needed books to be brought home. If your child says that homework was completed at school, tell him that it must be brought home so it can be reviewed by both of you.
2. Require your child to write down all assignments in an agenda (if the school does not provide one, get your child a small notebook pad to use.)
3. If all homework is indeed complete and acceptable, the child uses the homework time scheduled for review, reading or another academic activity.
4. If you have to return to school to retrieve homework, make sure your child does restitution to you for your time and expense.
5. The parent may need to ask the teacher to initial the homework assignment written in the agenda.
6. Check with teacher to see if homework assignments are on line or emailed to parents.

Tip to develop independence: From the very beginning have your child get the phone numbers of two friends in his class he can contact if he forgot or does not understand his homework assignment. It is expected that his homework will be done.

What do I do if my child will not do homework by himself?

1. Tell your child that you expect his homework to be done alone.
2. Help your child by "chunking" an assignment that is hard to complete. "Chunking" means that an assignment is broken down into smaller chunks with a quick break in between.
3. Give help only after your child has tried to solve his problem at least twice on his own.

Tip to develop independence: Once your child is following the plan of trying to solve a hard problem twice on his own before getting your help, encourage him to write his best guess for the hard problem and move on to finish the assignment before getting help from you.

(A best practice standardized test taking strategy is for a student to make his best guess on a hard problem, place a check next to that problem and move on to finish the part of the test assigned. Then

he can go back and take more time to work on the problem he had checked after he completes all other questions assigned.)

What to do when my child waits until the last minute to complete work?

1. When a long-range assignment is brought home, sit down with your child and plan with a calendar how it will be completed. Break the assignment down into manageable chunks. With long range assignments, work may have to be done during weekends and holidays.
2. Regularly check on your child's progress. Encourage and support his continuing work toward the goal of the finished project. Compliment him on finishing the product.

Tip to develop independence: Once you have worked with your child in teaching him how to tackle a long range assignment, give him more and more responsibility in creating the plan to be used to complete a long range assignment.

What do I do when my child refuses to do homework assignments?

1. Briefly discuss the importance of homework (check with the teacher for her input as to why she thinks it is important).
2. Clearly state the plan for homework: specific homework time, homework place, parent-checking procedure.
3. After making sure the plan is workable for your child (refer to previous tips, be sure your child understands what happens if homework is completed/is not completed. In other words there is a logical consequence (example: play outside) for completing homework as well as a logical consequence for homework not completed (no time for outside time).
4. A parent may need to conference with the teacher on homework expectations. Find out what the school consequences of incompleteness of homework are as well as ideas of how school and home can work together.

What to do when it takes "all night" to complete homework?

1. Discuss with the teacher how long she expects it to take her students to complete assigned homework. Ask if there is any reason your child cannot complete the expected assignments in the recommended amount of homework time she indicates.
2. Tell your child the time the teacher and you expect all homework to be completed.
3. If your child is doing homework in his room and it is taking too long, work with your child to find a less secluded homework space, such as the kitchen table, where more monitoring can be done.

Remember: A parent's job is to work himself out of a job! One goal of homework is to give your child the opportunity to learn to be responsible for himself.