



Improving Homework Habits: 8 Steps

Step 1 • Let your child know that you believe homework is important.

Calmly and firmly tell your child that homework is just as important as classroom work and that it will help your child to practice needed skills. Say that you expect homework to be done each night; homework is your child's job. If your child argues with you about homework, say calmly, "I understand; but the rule is that you are to do your homework." If your child continues to argue, continue to repeat firmly and calmly, "The rule in our home is that you are to do your homework. We will work together to make sure this happens."

Step 2 • Schedule a Daily Homework time.

This is a pre-planned time, determined by you *and* your child, set aside each day during which your child must do homework. All other activities must stop. Your child must go to his/her study area and get to work. Consider writing the time for each day of the week on a calendar and displaying it where it can be seen. Encourage your child to stick to the schedule. This will help eliminate arguments about when homework is to be done.

Step 3 • Set up a Homework Area.

Help your child choose a spot at home in which to do homework. Keep the study area quiet (no TV or radio) and off limits to others during homework time.

Step 4 • Create a Homework Supplies Kit.

Fill a container, such as a shoe box, with supplies needed to do homework (paper, pencils, pencil sharpener, stapler, tape, crayons, ruler, paper clips, erasers, dictionary). This will keep your child from wasting time looking for supplies. Avoid using these supplies for other family needs.

Step 5 • Check to see that your child is doing homework.

Check to see that your child *starts* on time and *finishes all work* during the scheduled time. If you are not at home call your child at the start of the homework time to see if he/she has started and ask your child to leave it out for you to look at when you return. As soon as possible, quickly look over the homework to see if it is neat and complete. If yes, give your child a hug and some praise. If not, talk with your child to determine the problem.

Step 6 • Praise and reward your child for good homework effort.

This is extremely important. Praise your child's efforts daily and be as specific as possible. Instead of giving general compliments like, "You're doing a great job," say something like, "I really like the way you wrote neatly and organized your work today," or "You remembered to use capitals and periods in all your sentences."

Step 7 • Take action when homework is not being done.

Sit down and calmly tell your child that he/she has a choice: either do homework or lose privileges. Say, "If you choose not to do your homework, you will not watch TV (talk on the phone, play with friends, etc.)." If your child argues, complains or cries: Do not give up. Stay calm. Be firm. Be consistent. Repeat the homework rule: "It's your choice. If you choose not to do your homework you will lose privileges." Remember that you have every right to insist that homework is completed each day. You are acting in the best interest of your child.

Step 8 • Work with the teacher(s).

Parents and teachers are partners in helping students succeed. Contact the teacher(s) if your child:

- frequently has difficulty doing assignments or waits until the last minute to do it.
- frequently does not bring work home or tells you there is no assignment.
- tells you he/she is always completing homework at school.

Adapted from: Lee Canter's *Skills for Parents: How to Help Your Child Succeed with Homework: Six Easy Steps to Better Homework Habits, Grades 1-12, 1992.*