

10 top tips to help your child with their homework

Children are more successful in school when parents take an active interest in their homework — it shows children that what they do is important.

Of course, helping with homework shouldn't mean spending hours hunched over a desk. Parents can be supportive by demonstrating study and organisation skills, explaining a tricky problem, or just encouraging kids to take a break. Who knows parents might learn a thing or two on the way!

Here are some tips to guide the way:

1. Know the teachers and what they're looking for in the homework. Attend school events, such as parent-teacher conferences, to meet your child's teachers. Ask about their homework policies and how you should be involved.
2. Set up a homework-friendly area. Make sure children have a well-lit place to complete homework. Keep supplies — paper, pencils, glue, scissors — within reach.
3. Schedule a regular study time. Some children work best in the afternoon, following a snack and play period; others may prefer to wait until after dinner.
4. Help them make a plan. On heavy homework nights or when there's an especially hefty assignment to tackle, encourage your child break up the work into manageable chunks. Create a work schedule for the night if necessary — and take time for a 15-minute break every hour, if possible.
5. Keep distractions to a minimum. This means no TV, loud music, or phone calls.
6. Make sure children do their own work. They won't learn if they don't think for themselves and make their own mistakes. Parents can make suggestions and help with directions. But it's a child's job to do the learning.
7. Be a motivator and monitor. Ask about assignments, quizzes, and tests. Give encouragement, check completed homework, and make yourself available for questions and concerns.
8. Set a good example. Do your children ever see you diligently balancing your budget or reading a book? Children are more likely to follow their parents' examples than their advice.
9. Praise their work and efforts. Post great work on the refrigerator. Mention academic achievements to relatives.
10. If there are continuing problems with homework, get help. Talk about it with your child's teacher.