

HOMWORK HASSLES

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Having to do homework feels like a drudge to many kids. I can remember that feeling myself. I wanted to stop thinking 'school' when I got home, and just relax and have fun for the rest of the day. The question of why children need to do homework has been asked for many a decade. The reason is school time is too short to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to lead a fruitful life. Parents are a child's first teacher and their ongoing coach. Children's attitudes towards learning are greatly influenced by the interest their parents show in the educational process.

As homework is a required extension of school learning, we need to be supportive and not make negative statements to, or in front of our children such as, "I always hated doing my homework." "I skipped homework all the time." Or, "I don't see why you kids have to do so much homework."

What we do need to do is to make doing homework as positive an experience as possible. We need to start by being interested and, if possible, involved in what our children are learning at school. By this I mean visiting the school, calling the teacher, attending parent/teacher meetings, going on school outings and supporting team games. These activities make us more aware of what our child is learning, their strong skills and where they need help.

It is very important to make homework part of a child's everyday routine. I would suggest you give your kids a snack and a break when they first get home from school and then set aside time for homework before dinner while the subjects are still fresh in their minds. It is very easy to let homework slide when your kids want to play with their friends after school. However, children need to follow the routines you set, not allow others to dictate.

If possible nominate a homework space where there are no distractions like TV, tempting computer games, the phone or family activity. While the kitchen table is handy for the sake of parental supervision it does not help the child's concentration if others are constantly talking, the TV is blaring or the phone is ringing. It is good to be available to help a child with homework, but not to take over. If you do it and your child gets a low grade, that's a bummer...for you! It is very easy to speed up the process by supplying the answers, but if the child doesn't understand the concepts they will not be able to move on. Working parents can still ensure their child is on task by checking that homework is done. Reviewing their work and offering help if the child is stuck lets your child know you care about them.

There is nothing like a carrot in front of a child's nose to prompt them to complete tasks. As an incentive, arrange a fun thing to do when the homework is

done successfully for a week (or daily if they are at elementary school) and you will be surprised how quickly your child can get it done. When it comes to vacation homework or even weekend homework, it is really important to be on top of it so your child is not rushing and getting frustrated by trying to do all the work at the last minute. If Johnny doesn't complete his homework, or forgets to do it altogether, then he should suffer the consequences. The school will have consequences and the parent can also add their own. When a child gets behind at school they begin to dislike the subject because they can't keep up. Don't let that happen. You may even need to get some outside tuition to ramp up your child's understanding in some subjects.

In summary, homework time is an opportunity for not only your child to learn, but for you to have input into their learning. Encourage them to experiment, to use the computer, the library, a field trip or any other means to stretch their minds. You will also be surprised how much you learn in the process! Homework can be fun when it promotes the need to look further and learn more. Remember that learning is a life-long journey.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.