

Homework

Why do homework?

Homework reinforces the things your child learns at school, giving them an opportunity to work through learning tasks and help their long-term understanding of the topic or activity. As your child moves from primary to secondary school, homework will become more frequent and may become harder.

What schools do

Every school has a homework policy, which they update and amend as needed. Some schools conduct forums or ask for input from parents when they are updating their homework policy.

Your child's school will also advise you of homework expectations and will work with you to establish good homework patterns at home.

Each teacher sets their own homework so the amount will vary between classes and subjects, as well as between schools.

What you can do

Encourage a homework routine

The timing of your child's homework will depend on your family's routines. It will also depend on when your child is most receptive and alert. Some children can concentrate better in the mornings, some do better in the late afternoon or evening.

Encouraging your child to set aside a time each school day to complete their homework tasks will set them up for good study habits throughout their secondary education. Help your child plan their homework time and where they'll do their homework. This should help them stay on track.

Have a comfortable space for your child to do their homework

Your child will find it much easier to do their homework if they have a comfortable place that has everything they need and is associated with 'doing homework'. This can be a space set aside in their bedroom, in your study or even a quiet spot in the family or rumpus room.

A good homework space:

- is comfortable: not too hot, not too cold, and has plenty of fresh air
- is quiet: consider creating a space well away from where siblings or family members gather
- is well-lit: use a good lamp or overhead light to make sure the space is not too bright or too dark
- has all the things needed to do homework tasks: consider stationery, a computer, a printer and a USB stick

- is free from distractions: television and computer games should not be anywhere near where your child does their homework.

You and your child could consider doing homework at a local library that has desks and tables for quiet study. This is a good alternative, particularly if you don't have a lot of space at home.

Some children study better with others. If your child falls into this category, consider forming a study group with a few of their friends and take turns hosting the group at your house with the other families.

Tackle the harder tasks first

Ask your child about the homework tasks they have to complete. You could try this every few days at the beginning of the year, then weekly as your child settles into a homework routine.

Discuss their tasks and listen to their ideas. Encourage them to tackle the difficult ones first, while they are fresh. Not only will they feel relieved once the difficult homework is over, they'll also be learning how to tackle difficult or competing tasks in an organised way.

Be flexible

There will be times when your child will need to reschedule their set homework time. Help them to reschedule their homework, perhaps by doing some tasks at night and the rest the next morning. Overall, make sure that they have enough time to get their homework completed.

Create a study timetable

Help your child create their own homework timetable so they can keep track of their work throughout the week. You could use a diary or a calendar to help you create this, or you and your child could create the timetable together.

When working out your child's homework timetable:

- enter all the non-homework activities that your child is involved in – things like sporting activities, tasks they are responsible for doing around the house, their favourite TV show and reading time – on the days and time they occur
- get your child to list all their homework tasks for that week and when they are due to be handed in
- ask your child to estimate how long each task might take them to complete. Be generous in allocating time for these and break up big tasks into smaller chunks. You could even colour-code each subject so that your child can see at a glance what subject they'll be working on
- allow a short 10 to 15 minute break every hour they study. Taking these short breaks will help your child stay fresh and concentrate, making it easier for them to complete their homework
- allow adequate breaks for mealtimes, and encourage your child to eat with the rest of the family instead of at their desk or homework space.