



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™*

## **Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# **Homework Help: Tips for Families**

Helping your child with homework in a caring and planful way can increase engagement, avoid possible conflict and improve school success. Below are some things to think about and ways to increase homework success.

## **What to consider**

Each child is unique. Before you start helping your child with their homework, think about the following:

- **Developmental level** – The younger the child, the shorter the homework time should be. If it takes a young child a long time to do homework, this could be a sign more help is needed. Talk to your child's teacher.
- **Academic abilities** – It is important to talk with your child's teacher(s) if the homework seems too hard or lengthy for your child. This is important if your child has special learning strategies at school, such as an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 plan. Know the tactics teachers use at school to help support homework routines.
- **Social-emotional/behavioral skills** – Children with ADHD and/or those with developmental disabilities may need more structure than other children their age. Behavioral skills, such as how they handle frustration or redirection, may also require additional reflection on how to best approach homework help for your child.

## **How to increase homework success**

### **Setting the stage**

- Set up a regular homework time and try to stick with it.
- Avoid doing homework at the end of a busy day or transitioning from a fun activity to homework. It is best to start homework after a natural transition, for example when coming home from school, after sports practice or after dinner.
- Give your child a special place to do homework. A desk or table in a well-lit area is ideal. Have tools like pencils and paper within reach.

- Complete homework in a distraction-free setting.
  - limit background noise
  - finish homework away from favorite activities
  - no TV, phone calls, texting or loud music
- Have an adult nearby to answer questions and check progress.
- Have a list of classmates to call if they forget an assignment.
- If your child has been prescribed medicine by a health care provider to help them focus throughout the school day, try to complete homework routines as soon as possible after school. This keeps the medicine from wearing off before they can finish their homework.

### **Getting started**

- Before homework starts, plan a fun activity your child can look forward to once homework is done.
- Set clear routines for homework that include planned breaks.
- Complete practice questions or tasks instead of the actual homework. This ensures your child has a chance to practice and learn skills before tackling actual homework questions.
- Praise your child for their efforts. Examples are “great job trying hard on your math homework” or “you did a great job reading that paragraph. Let’s try the next one.”
- Approach homework mistakes with a neutral or supportive tone. Let your child learn from their mistakes.
- Help your child break up big projects into smaller parts and have them guess how long it will take to get each part done. Then, compare their guess with how long it actually took. This helps children learn to budget their time.

### **Completing homework**

- Make homework more engaging. This can be done by linking the content to the child’s interests or using timers and rewards during breaks for effort.
- To stay motivated, some children need to know exactly how many tasks to do before a break. For example, a child may do 5 math problems, then take a break of 2 to 3 minutes.
- Plan breaks at a table or other chosen spot in the middle of homework time. Avoid leaving the area to reduce transitions back to the table.
- If your child is upset, let them discuss their concerns. Listen to your child and state their feelings back to them. For example, “This math is really making you frustrated, isn’t it?” After they feel understood, you can help them refocus.
- If they try and still do not understand the homework, help them find ways to ask for help like writing a note to the teacher.
- Set a good example. Let your child watch you focus on tasks like reading, doing office work or paying bills to model persistence with tasks that mirror homework.