

## ***Creating an Ideal Homework Center***

“Study from new books but from old teachers.”—Turkish proverb

Homework. Most kids complain about it, but kids who learn the skills to get their schoolwork done are much more likely to succeed in school. In [\*Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development\*](#), Search Institute research revealed that time spent on homework is associated with higher test scores, higher grades, improved scientific literacy, fewer behavior problems, and less marijuana use. You can help your child succeed by creating an ideal homework center in your home.

### ***Try it...***

#### ***For all parents***

- With your child, locate a place in your home where your child can do homework each evening. This may be a desk, but it also may be the kitchen table.
- Together buy homework supplies. It's better to have too many than not enough. (You don't want a lack of pencils to become an excuse.) You don't need to spend much money, but it's helpful to have pencils, paper, a folder (or organizer to keep track of the homework), and erasers.
- If your child does not get a homework organizer from your school, create or buy one. Your child won't be able to do homework if he or she doesn't know what the assignments are. Getting organized and getting in the habit of tracking daily (and long-term) homework is a key skill to build in your child.
- What's most important in your child doing homework well is not so much the amount he or she has, but how accurately homework is completed, the quality of homework your child has, and the thinking skills involved.
- Get more homework tips from the book [\*How to Help Your Child with Homework\*](#) by Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D.
- Try to be present during your child's homework times, especially when they're younger. Sit next to them and offer to help them. Or if you have bills to pay, work you need to do from your job, or some other project, do it while your child is doing homework. Talk about how *everyone* has homework—even adults. Your modeling teaches your child a lot about the importance and value of homework.

#### ***For parents with children ages birth to 5***

- Read aloud to your child every day—throughout the day. Although young children do not typically get “homework” (and developmentally, they shouldn't), you can help keep them curious and learning by reading interesting picture books.

- Do something intellectually stimulating with your child every day. Go for a color walk where you look for specific colors, such as red, yellow, or blue. Bring in a snowball, or use an ice cube, and place it in a bowl for your child to see what happens as it melts. Visit a children's museum.
- Remember to emphasize all parts of learning, not just memorization. Give kids time to practice cutting with child-size scissors, stringing large beads, drawing with crayons (or washable markers), jumping, running, and playing with other children. The kids who are most ready for kindergarten have been practicing all their skills: intellectual, social, emotional, and physical.

### ***For parents with children ages 6 - 9***

- Attend back-to-school events and open houses at the beginning of the year to learn what teachers expect for homework. Getting on the same page with the teacher right away will help you know how to support your child in getting homework done.
- When your child does not have homework, have your child do a different type of learning so that he or she gets used to learning something extra every day. This can be as simple as reading a book or researching together on the Internet to learn why birds fly south for the winter, or trying a new element of art, such as drawing a portrait of your family pet. A helpful Web site for ideas is [HomeworkSpot](#).
- Whenever you help your child with homework, be sure that your child is doing the homework (and you are not). Your role is to ask questions, give examples, and assist your child in learning concepts, not give them the answers.

### ***For parents with children ages 10 - 15***

- At this age, kids often throw out the homework skills they've mastered. Unfortunately, too many try to throw out homework all together. Be firm that homework still needs to be done. If your child wants to do homework in front of the TV while listening to an MP3 player, allow it as long as your child completes homework well and does well in school. If grades start to slip, set new rules where your child needs to focus more on homework and less on other distractions.
- Negotiate times for your child to do his or her homework. Some want a break after school. If so, set a time limit. You may also need to set limits on other things as well to ensure that your child is getting homework done—and done well.
- Keep in touch with teachers about your child's progress in school. Many schools now have Internet portals where you can access your child's grades, assignments, attendance, and tardies. If so, check this weekly (if your child is doing well) or daily (if your child starts to slip).

### ***For parents with children ages 16 - 18***

- By this age, your teenager should have strong homework skills if you've been building them from an early age. However, some slip and others haven't mastered certain skills. The biggest skill that many older teenagers often need is how to spread out long-term projects and how to study for major exams (such as the ACT, the SAT, AP and IB exams, and final exams). Pull out a calendar if your teen has trouble with this skill and have him or her break down these projects and test preparation into week-by-week (or day-by-day) chunks.
- Continue to offer your assistance for homework, but be clear about what you will and will not do. (Some parents end up pulling all nighters with their procrastinating teenager to help him or her get a project done.) One of the most helpful ways you

can provide assistance is to proof papers and college essays. But work with your teenager to build in extra time for your feedback, in case you discover that the paper needs a heavy rewrite and not just a correction of a few typographical errors.

- Talk with high school counselors and teachers to create an academic schedule for your teenager from ninth to twelfth grade that challenges your teenager and deepens his or her skills. You want to keep your teenager growing (without boring or placing too much pressure on your teenager) so that he or she gradually masters skills to take the next step after high school.