

Coping with Homework

The completion of homework is a big issue in many homes. Some children enjoy their homework and complete it without a problem. Others however, dislike homework and getting them to sit down and do it can be a real challenge for parents. So what can you do to make life easier for both yourself and your child and also make sure that the homework gets done?

The first thing you can do is to talk with your child's teacher or other parents in the class to check what the recommended time that should be spent on homework each night is. Then try to change homework into a more positive experience.

The important thing to remember is that the homework is your child's responsibility and not yours. While you can be in the room and help if they are really having difficulty, you cannot do your children's homework for them. Your child has to take the responsibility for their own homework. A couple of things you can do are:

- Make sure they have a good place to do their homework – sitting on the floor watching TV is not a good idea, if they have a desk let them use it or the kitchen table can be good, where you're close by to help if required.
- Do not allow distractions such as TV or Playstation. It's impossible to concentrate on two things at once. If they are watching television, they are not applying themselves to the homework. If another child is playing a game in the same room, it is the same distraction. Explain to them that if they apply themselves to the homework without the distraction they will complete the task much more quickly and will have more time for TV or games.
- Try to stick to the same time each day, not too late so they are not too tired. This seems common sense but lots of children moan and complain and parents sometimes fall into the trap and give in. Have you ever heard your child say "in a minute" or "later"...very common words! Sticking to the same time each day helps them develop a routine.
- Limit the time they spend on the homework to that recommended by the teacher. If your young child is spending more time than recommended doing homework, you may need to talk to the teacher. Is he having a problem? Does he need extra help? Is he just not working at it? The teacher is the best judge of just how long the child should take to complete the homework and if your child cannot manage their homework in this time, this should be checked out.
- Encourage them as they work but give them space to do the homework themselves. If they ask for your help, it's easy sometimes to give them the answer so they'll finish up and you can get on with other things. However, it's important that they do the work themselves. You can encourage them by acknowledging that it might be difficult but also notice what they've already completed and encourage them to do a bit more. This helps them to see that they have done some already and maybe it's not as bad as they think. It also shows them that you care and have listened to them.
- Let them have a reward when the homework is complete. Children spend a long day at school and then have to do homework too. It is a big task for them and it's nice for them to think that there is something good at the end of it. The reward can be something simple like watching TV, doing a jigsaw together, playing a computer game – something they enjoy and will look forward to. The reward is an incentive for them to get it finished.