



Tips for Parents: Homework

Purposes of homework

Practice. Assignments are made to increase speed, obtain mastery, or maintain skills. Examples include reviewing multiplication tables, studying spelling words, or practicing a foreign language.

Preparation. Assignments are made to prepare students for future classroom activities. Students, for example, might be asked to read two chapters on a social studies topic and be prepared to participate in a class debate.

Extension. Assignments are made to extend and enrich a student's classroom learning. Students would be asked to apply knowledge and skills learned during class to related project-like activities.

The homework test

Is your child's homework being checked for accuracy or quality on a daily basis? If students don't get regular feedback, the message is that homework isn't all that important. If students view homework as just "busy work," there really is no incentive to do it well.

Does your child's homework assignments reflect what students know and is it directly related to in-class learning? If a teacher just sends home miscellaneous worksheets for the sake of giving homework, a child would be better off reading a book, participating in extra curricular activities, or just being with their family.

How much of your child's homework are you actually doing? If your child is having a problem with an assignment, work through an example, but don't do the assignment. This really is a form of cheating. It may stop the complaining momentarily, but won't help in the long run. You're also sending a subtle message that you think your child isn't smart enough to do the homework alone.

The big question: "Should children be given homework assignments every night?" Homework, for teachers, has become a "darned if you do" and "darned if you don't" dilemma. Parents worry when their children come home and say they don't have any homework. But, there are also times when parents resent homework because it may intrude on their family's quality time. Ironically, it is often public pressure that causes teachers to send home a ton of homework.

Frankly, this homework controversy has become an almost vicious cycle. It's hard to tell which comes first—the homework or the demand for it. Children probably shouldn't be given homework every night, **but...**

Homework assignments should reflect what students know--

and be directly related to in class learning. Homework is supposed to help children learn. Busy work—repetitive work such as copying spelling words ten times each, or doing 75 multiplication problems every night—doesn't really contribute toward learning. In fact, it can turn kids off to learning.

The emphasis for homework should be on quality rather than quantity. Homework doesn't have to be given every night. When homework is assigned, it should be directly related to in-class learning, and be checked for accuracy and quality on a daily basis. If students don't get regular feedback, the message is clear: homework isn't all that important.

For more information:

Web links:

-PTA "Helping your Child Get the Most Out of Homework"

http://www.pta.org/archive_article_details_1118088722562.html

-National Education Association's "Help Your Student Get the Most Out of Homework"

<http://www.nea.org/parents/homework.html>

-US Department of Education "Helping your Child with Homework"

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/homework/homework.pdf>

-US Dept. of Ed "Homework tips for parents"

<http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/homework/homeworktips.pdf>

Videos:

"Homework: Tips for Teachers"

"The Homework Problem: A Neighborhood Solution"

"The How-To of Homework: Just for Parents"

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