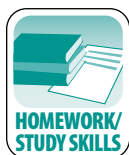


End your child's homework hassles with proven strategies



You're right if you think children have more homework than they used to. One university study covering a recent 15-year period found that the homework load for children ages three to 11 has increased by 50 percent.

Homework has also gotten harder. And half of all parents spend too much time almost every day on their children's homework.

If that's you, it's not good. Either your child has significant problems getting homework done—or you're uncomfortable letting him turn in imperfect work.

Doing or fixing your child's homework for him only worsens academic problems. The teacher needs to see any mistakes your child makes on homework so she can figure out where his weaknesses are. If his homework is always perfect because you have been correcting all of his errors at home, he won't get the help that only the teacher can provide.

So step back. Answer questions and help interpret your child's assignments. But let your child do the work.



If your child still seems unable to handle his homework, try these tactics:

- **Go online.** Many schools post homework assignments on the Web. This can help you and your child understand what's expected.

- **Help your child get organized.** Call him from work or meet with him at home every day after school.

Decide together what assignments he should work on first.

- **Contact your child's teacher.** Tell her about your child's problems with homework. Ask for suggestions.

If needed, get your child extra help at school. Or consider getting a tutor.

- **Take advantage of** your school's homework buddy system. If none exists, have your child call a classmate to work together.

- **Eliminate distractions.** Don't allow the telephone or television to interfere with homework. Record your child's favorite show. As a reward, he can watch it when he completes his homework. He can return any phone calls later, too.

Source: Melissa Kantor, "Whose Homework Is It Anyway?" *Working Mother*, November 2001 (Working Mother Media, 1-800-627-0960, www.workingmother.com).

Play fun games that will help your child learn to read



Learning to read is like learning to ride a bike. There may be spills along the way. But if your child keeps at it, she will soon master the skill.

Helping beginning readers can be a lot of fun. Here are two games you can play with your child:

1. **What's My Sound?** With your child, cut out pictures from magazines. They should be simple words your child knows: cat, dog, girl, hat. Glue each picture onto a card. Put the cards face-down in a pile. Have your child draw a card and tell you the word it represents. Have her stretch out the starting and ending sounds. "This is a c-c-c-a-t-t-t." Then have your child look through the pile until she finds another card with the same beginning sound. So a picture of a car, a kite or a kangaroo would all be a match. Then play the game again, this time looking for words with the same ending sounds. These could be a hat, a goat or a bat.
2. **Make up your own rhymes.** Read a book filled with rhyming words. (Dr. Seuss books are great for this.) Then take turns making up rhymes. If you say "cat," your child can say "sat." You answer with "bat" and so on.

Source: David A. Sousa, *How the Brain Learns to Read*, ISBN: 1-412-90601-6 (Corwin Press, a Sage Publications Company, 1-800-818-7243, www.corwinpress.com).

Keep your introverted child from being overlooked at school



We live in a world of extroverts. So a child who takes longer to speak up in class can be at a disadvantage.

Teachers can sometimes misread a child's basic temperament. They may think a child is not paying attention when instead he's just sorting things out in his own mind.

To help your introverted child be successful in school:

- **Talk with his teacher.** Let her know that your child may need a few seconds longer to think before he speaks. Put this in a positive frame. Say, "Josh might not be the first one

to speak up, but he tells me he usually knows the answer."

- **Encourage him to form friendships.** Introverts make great friends, but they often prefer being with one or two people, not a whole crowd.
- **Give him some "alone" time.** After a day at school, your introvert may need time to be by himself.
- **Help him recognize his strengths.** Introverts are great problem solvers. They're creative. They are strong learners.

Source: Elizabeth Larson, "Raising an introvert in an extrovert world," *Child Magazine*, May 2005 (1-800-727-3682, www.child.com).

Teach your child how to show respect to adults in the school



"My mom says you can't do anything to me—we'll sue."

Sadly, that kind of talk is something that teachers hear every day. In fact, bad behavior from children as young as first grade is often the reason that good teachers quit teaching.

Respect begins at home. Here are some tips on ways you can teach your child to show respect for teachers and other adults at school:

- **Watch what you say.** If your child hears you saying bad things about a teacher, she'll pick up your attitude. Tell your child that teachers deserve respect because they are in charge.
- **Discuss any concerns** about what's going on in school with the teacher as one adult to another. Your child may be telling you things about the classroom that are exaggerated—or simply not true. To get the truth, make an appointment and visit with the teacher.

- **Don't undermine** the teacher's efforts at discipline. All children deserve a chance to learn in a peaceful classroom. If your child breaks the rules, support the school's efforts to enforce them.
- **Teach your child** that everyone who works in a school should be treated with respect.

Source: "Bad Behavior," *Report to Parents*, April 2005, (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1-800-386-2377, www.naespp.org).

Are you teaching your child how to live a healthy life?



Today, one-third of all children are obese or at risk of becoming obese. Parents play an important role in fighting this health crisis.

Are you doing all you can to help your child be healthy and happy?

Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the statements below to find out:

1. **I encourage my child** to drink lots of water.
2. **I build exercise** into our daily routine. Whether we are just running around in the yard or going on a bike ride, our family tries to exercise together.
3. **I involve my child in chores** that help keep him active. Washing the car and walking the dog burn lots of calories.
4. **I limit my child's "screen time."** Kids burn about 60 calories in an hour of staring at the TV or computer, compared with 200 calories in an hour of playing outside.
5. **We try to eat meals together** regularly. Kids who eat family meals at home get more fruits and vegetables—and fewer sweets and soft drinks—than those who don't.

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer is a step toward a healthier life for your child. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.



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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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Use an allowance to teach your child lessons in responsibility



Don't think your child is old enough for an allowance? Even first graders understand that they can exchange money

for things.

An allowance can help your child learn to manage a regular amount of money. It will teach her financial responsibility and decision-making skills. When she buys something she later regrets because the week's money is all gone, she'll learn the value of a dollar—and a better way to manage it.

Counting bills and coins will improve your child's math skills, too. Have her subtract money she spends from her allowance each time she buys something.

Follow these allowance guidelines:

- **Choose the right amount** for your child's weekly allowance. One rule of thumb is to give a dollar for each year in your child's age. So your eight-year-old would get \$8.00.

Give less, if needed, to stay within your budget.

- **Don't link your child's allowance** to chores. She must do chores around the house to contribute to the family. You may reward her for doing extra work, though.
- **Discuss what you expect** your child's allowance to cover—snacks at school, extras you don't normally buy her on shopping trips, etc.
- **Teach your child** the "four jar" approach to allowance. The first jar is for daily expenses. The second jar is to save for something she wants in the near future. The third is for charity. The last jar is for long-term savings.
- **Give your child some leeway**—and limits—on spending. You need to monitor what your child purchases. Buying a music CD is fine. Buying a CD with inappropriate lyrics is not.

Source: Robin Immerman, "Dollars and Sense," *Parents*, August 2002 (Meredith Corporation, 1-800-727-3682, www.parents.com).

Describe the kind of behavior you want and you may just get it



She studied hard and got a 90 on her test. You're delighted and you want to praise your child for good behavior.

But think carefully before you speak. Some kinds of praise may actually make your child feel she can't live up to what you've said.

Sometimes, parents overdo it. They say, "You're a genius" to a child who got one good grade. That's bound to make her nervous. "I'm no genius," she may think. "Paul's the genius. He got an A without even studying."

Instead, try describing your child's positive behavior. "You studied hard for

that test," you can say. After your child hears her accomplishments praised, she will praise herself. "I can do well in math if I work at it."

It's much easier to toss off a quick comment like "You're great." It's harder to look carefully at what your child did and then put it into words. Once she begins to think of herself as a hard worker (or an honest person, or a person who writes funny letters), she will continue that behavior in the future.

Source: Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, *How to Talk So Kids Can Learn*, ISBN: 0-684-82472-8 (Scribner Paperbacks, published by Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonandsays.com).

My sixth grader just brought home a dreadful report card. His teacher says he's very bright. But unless he wants to do the work, he just won't do it. I've tried everything, from bribes to battles. Nothing is working. How can I make my son do schoolwork he doesn't feel like doing?

Questions & Answers

Here's the sad truth about life: We all have to do some things we don't want to do. But helping children learn that lesson can sometimes be harder on parents than it is on kids.

Here are a few things you can do to try to get your son back on the right track:

- **Talk with your son** about the reason teachers give homework. Yes, he may have learned the math the first time the teacher showed him how to do it. But practice is important. Even Tiger Woods spends time each day practicing his golf swing—and he's the best ever.
- **Talk about the things you do** when you have a tough challenge to tackle. Perhaps you play your favorite music when you are paying bills. You may reward yourself with a few minutes on the computer after you have finished a household chore. Talk with your son about this "spoonful of sugar" method. Then ask what might make it a little easier for him to do his homework.
- **Remain calm.** You'll have better luck if you can stay calm and let your child have as much control as possible. Then accept that it's his homework, and that consequences like a bad report card may do more to teach him this lesson than anything you can say or do.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

Boost your child's spelling skills with games in the car



Most families spend lots of time in the car. Here are four fun games you can play that will also boost your child's spelling skills:

- 1. Plurals race.** As you are driving, challenge your child to a contest. You'll look for words that form their plural by adding an *s*. He'll look for words that form the plural by adding *es*. Who can find the most words in a given period of time? (You'll have a big advantage here, so switch often—it's more fun if you both win.)
- 2. I spy.** Take turns looking for things you can see. Then say the plural of that word. ("I spy a seatbelt. The plural is seatbelts.") Then spell the word and give the other player a chance. As time goes on, you'll find the challenge increases.
- 3. "Y not?"** Look for instances on billboards or ads where a word keeps the final *y* before adding a suffix (words like *crying*, *saying*, *playing*). Then look for instances where a word changes the final *y* to an *i* before adding a suffix (*cried*, *said*, *cherries*).
- 4. Stump the parent.** We all have words that are hard for us to spell. The next time you're in the car, challenge yourself. Tell your child five words you have difficulty spelling correctly. Spell them aloud while your child writes down what you said. When you get home, check yourself.

Source: Mark Pennington, *Better Spelling in 5 Minutes a Day: Fun Spelling Activities for Kids and Parents On the Go*, ISBN: 0-761-52430-4 (Prima Publishing, 1-800-726-0600, www.primapublishing.com).

"There are many little ways to enlarge your child's world. Love of books is the best of all."

—Jacqueline Kennedy

Reap the benefits of participating in 'TV Turnoff Week' with your child



During the last week of April, consider joining the thousands of families who will be turning off the television.

Be sure to talk with your family first. Together, come up with a long list of fun activities that you can do that don't involve the television.

Here are a few ideas to get your family started:

- **Dig out that puzzle** you've wanted to put together.
- **Pull out the ingredients** to make a batch of cookies or another favorite treat.
- **Lace up your sneakers** and take a walk or bike ride through your neighborhood.



- **Visit the library** and stock up on some great books for the entire family to read.

The first day will probably be hard. But as the week goes on, you'll find that you and your kids miss TV less and less. Even if you switch on the set for an hour or two, you'll probably find it easier to reduce your family's TV time in the future.

One second grader spelled out reasons why you might want to switch off your set. "I didn't really like TV Turnoff Week, except my grades went up and I was in a good mood all week."

For more information and a list of TV-free activities visit the TV Turnoff Network at www.tvturnoff.org.

Make sure your child knows the difference between right & wrong



Your child probably believes cheating is wrong. But at this age, she doesn't have firm convictions about it.

If you find out your child has cheated during a test or copied material from the Internet for a paper, grab the chance to mold her values.

Here are some tips:

- **Don't come down too harshly.** Don't accuse your child of doing something wrong right away. First ask, "Did you realize that writing spelling words on your hand for the test was wrong?"
- **Ask why she cheated.** Does she feel too much pressure by you to get all A's? Is she afraid you will be

disappointed with a less than perfect score?

- **Tell her cheating is wrong** and that you're disappointed in her actions.
- **Discuss possible consequences.** Perhaps she can volunteer to tutor a younger student after school. Or spend more time on her studies and less time watching TV.
- **Have your child apologize** to the teacher. Help her write a note explaining that she knows what she did is wrong and why—and promising never to cheat again.

Source: Stacy DeBroff, *The Mom Book Goes to School: Insider Tips To Ensure Your Child Thrives in Elementary and Middle School*, ISBN: 978-0-7432-5754-1 (Free Press, A Division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).