



How to Motivate Your Child to do Homework

Getting kids to buckle down and do their work at home can be very frustrating to parents. Realize it or not there is a psychology for every child's reason for being unmotivated. If you can tap into the secret code lying within your child's personality you just may be able to create the environment that will enhance their ability to embrace the dreaded reality of homework and get it done without all the ruckus.

Identify your child's homework personality:

Procrastinator: Are they always coming up with excuses and distractions when doing their homework?

How to motivate:

- * Work right beside them. Whether you are paying bills, writing in your journal, reading a magazine or sorting laundry, stay beside them and you will find there will be much less excuses.
- * Give an incentive. If you schedule homework before fun-time they have something to anticipate so they are more apt to work much harder. Occasionally link a special reward if you see your child is really trying and struggling, this will build more momentum.

Speed Demons: Does your child rush through their work often making careless mistakes?

How to slow them down:

- * Mom and Dad can play student. Your child can teach you the lesson as if they were the teacher. Memory retention is boosted a great deal if you teach someone else what you are learning.
- * Allow multitasking. Speed demons are usually good at doing two things at once so if you let them listen to music or something they might enjoy themselves they won't feel so rushed to get it done. It takes a little bit of boredom out of what already feels like an after school cloud over the sunshine.

Wanderer: Does your child sit down to do their work and then get up often (bathroom, drink, snack, watch video etc.)?

How to make them stay put!

- * Establish a designated study area that has everything they need where they don't have to get up. A quiet place with a drink, snack, plenty of lighting, sharpened pencils etc. Sometimes children just get frustrated when they don't have everything they need to get a job done so they find what they think are better things to do with their time.
- * Set a timer. If your child still has trouble keeping their undivided attention on their work then set a timer and give them so long to do every few problems. Make a game out of it to keep them interesting.

Perfectionist: Some people have children that actually want everything too perfect. They spend way too much time picking their work and making sure everything is correct that they get frustrated that their homework is not getting done.

How to calm their nerves and lessen their expectations.

- * Give a time limit. Perfectionists need to know when to quit and let go. "Can you finish in an hour?" A little pressure might make them see they need to get it done. Don't discourage their desire to get the answers right, but try to build their confidence to where if it is not all perfect they won't fall apart.
- * Be a cheerleader parent. A perfectionist may need some bragging and encouraging. "You did awesome on your test." This will make them feel accepted, and when they fail teach them to shake it off and try again.

Best Homework Tips:

- 1) Make a list of your family's major homework issues and problems.**
Does homework take too much time? Do your kids have trouble getting started, keeping track of assignments, turning it all in? Are you tired of feeling that it is *your* homework? Write down whatever is bothering you. You cannot solve a problem until you know exactly what it is.
Share the list with your kids. You might say, "Every night we fight about homework. Here's the list of what really makes me crazy. I'd like to have some enjoyable evenings, wouldn't you? What do you think is causing all of the problems?" Listen to what your kids say! They are truly the ones suffering!
- 2) Address the problems and solutions you and your child discussed in a Homework Contract.** This does not have to be anything fancy, just be sure to include answers to any on-going issues. For Example, if your child has trouble getting started on homework, one of the items on the homework contract might be: *Mike will start his homework by 4 PM every day.* (it may be a good idea to say, "five minutes until homework" to give your kids a heads up and gets them ready to work). Please keep your homework contract simple: no more than four or five homework rules.
- 3) Give your kid an incentive.** No, I do not think children should get paid to do their homework! Give your children short term and long term incentives for doing their homework quickly and independently. And, no, I am not talking about an expensive, fancy reward system. It could be as simple as: *"Mike can watch TV if he finishes his homework by dinner" or "Michaela can choose Saturday night's restaurant if she does her homework all week without being reminded."*
- 4) Make a magic Homework Box.** This is a box filled with your child's daily homework supplies and materials. At homework time, the box comes out, and it is time to boogie! No more "I can't find a pencil" or "where is my ruler?" excuses. When homework is finished, everything goes back into the Magic Homework Box - ready for tomorrow.
- 5) Get some Homework Organization.** Disorganization is a problem for many school-aged children. Your job is to teach them a system; their job is to use it! You know how good you feel when you clean out a closet full of junk? Your kids need to feel that way too. Help them clean out their backpacks, put together homework folders, set up files for returned tests and school work. If your child typically loses homework after you have seen them do it, watch as

they place it in a homework folder, put the folder in their backpack and then put the backpack at the front door!!!

- 6) **Speak to the teacher.** Believe it or not most teachers are not out to ruin lives and make kids hate school! Many times they have no idea what is happening at home. Please, please, please, speak to your child's teachers! If your child is spending two hours a night on homework that should be taking 30 minutes - the teacher needs to know. And, although your child may be trustworthy, please speak to their teacher before making judgments.
- 7) **Create a homework friendly home.** Ask yourself, "If I were a kid, could I do my homework at our house?" Is your home too noisy, too messy, too dark? Do you have a good dictionary - and can anyone find it? Making your home homework friendly does not have to be expensive or time-consuming, but it does require some thought and effort. Control or limit meaningful distractions.
- 8) **To hover or not to hover?** Every child is different and has different needs. Some children can work independently at school and can work equally independently at home. They should be encouraged to do their homework on their own - although you might look in on them occasionally. However, some students are not at a maturity level yet where they can work completely independently. For those kids, parents may need to work with them and keep them on task. However, this does not mean that parents should do the homework for their child!! If the work is too difficult for them, speak to the teacher or get extra help from the teacher or outside tutor. When your child says, "I can't do it," ask them:
 - "What don't you get?"*
 - "What parts do you understand?"*
 - "Can you give me an example?"*
 - "What do you think the answer is?"**
 - "How can you find out?"*It is a difficult balance between being in a supportive role and being in a teaching role. Your job as parents is to support your child and to provide them with the support needed to complete homework independently.
- 9) **Make your kids go to bed!** They need sleep more than another page of math problems. Forget the fact that there are a myriad of physical, social, psychological and developmental reasons why kids need the proper amount of sleep; chronically sleep-deprived students cannot learn. So, it is okay if your child stays up late once in a while working on a project, but it should be a very rare occasion.

10) Managing their time for homework. Establish a study routine. This needs to be the same time every day. Let your children have some input on when study time occurs. Once the time is set, stick to that schedule. Kids thrive on structure even if they protest. It may take several weeks for the routine to become a habit. Persist. By having a regular study time you are demonstrating that you value education.

Homework can interfere with important social and recreational activities if the child does not plan ahead. Teach your child to make both a weekly and monthly schedule for activities. On a daily basis have your child decide what needs to be done that day and when to do it. Don't forget that it is important that you include time in the day when nobody talks about or does any homework. Studies show that just hearing the word homework stresses children out, raises their heart rate, constricts blood vessels etc. Learning time management is developmental so children may need your help.

11) Monitor your child's daily homework. Check your child's completed homework for neatness and accuracy and give feedback.

12) Emphasize effort, not ability. Students need to learn to attribute success with the amount of effort that they put into their work, not how smart they are.

13) Be supportive and encouraging, avoid criticism and punishment. Your general approach with your child around homework should be positive. Avoid using criticism and punishment to try to get your child to do homework. You want your child to approach new challenges with confidence in their abilities, and to be proud of their accomplishments. Be patient and do not expect miracles overnight. Children are still developing and many just need a little time to develop the maturity that allows them to complete homework assignments and chores with a minimum of supervision.

14) Communicate with school and stay on top of current grades. Schools often have a way for parents to check their child's grades and homework. Become active with these programs. Being aware of what your child is doing is a wonderful way to be able to assist them.

Quotes We Often Hear from Parents and Children:

“I did my homework on the bus”

“I don’t have any homework”

“I did my homework in school”

“The teacher never told us.....”

“The teacher never taught that in class”

“I left my books at home (or school)”

“There is no one I can call to get the homework”

“My child is too old for me to:

- Sit and do homework with
- Check their agenda pads
- Check their homework
- Help them organize”

“How was I supposed to know he is failing?”

“I’ve been through middle school already”

“My child won’t like me checking up on him/her”