

Supporting homework

Not only does homework support what your child is learning about at school, it also gives you a chance to become involved in that learning process. The level of involvement obviously changes the older your child gets, but as a parent, showing interest in your child's homework, whatever age they are, is important - even if your maths is a little rusty!

Top tips for getting the most out of homework sessions

1. **Where** – find the right place at home to do the homework. Each of us learns or works best in different ways – this may be alone in the bedroom, or in the kitchen whilst making dinner. Wherever works best for you, it will ideally be a calm bright area all set up with the tools you know you and your child may need. Keep distractions to a minimum so turn off the TV and keep the music low to help you and them concentrate on the task at hand.
2. **How** – make sure you are aware how the school is teaching your children. Teaching methods change, so don't assume you can show them how you used to do things. Ask the school for guidance if you need to.
3. **Routine** – some children work best after school (following a snack and short play!) while others may prefer to wait until after dinner. Whenever suits your child, stick to a regular time to cut the nagging or the protests to a minimum.
4. **Fuel** – make sure they have had a healthy snack or dinner before working so they are less likely to be distracted!
5. **Talk** – find the time to discuss your child's homework with them; this will show them you think it's important, and may help them feel confident about what they are doing.

Why supporting homework is a great way to stay involved

1. **You can do it in the home environment.** It's a chance to stay connected to your child's learning without having to leave home, and the familiar surroundings will be comforting to your child and help them feel at ease and ready to engage with the task in hand.
2. **It will help you to appreciate the demands that are placed on your child.** We tend to forget how challenging schooling can be, with so many different subjects that we're required to learn. Regular homework sessions will ensure you stay empathetic to your child as their workload and stress levels.
3. **It's good to keep your brain active too.** When you use the majority of your brainpower to do a job you know well and mundane tasks like shopping for groceries, our cognitive abilities can stagnate. Taking on the challenge of homework along with your child will help keep you sharp, too!

4. **It's a good opportunity to spend time with your child.** You may even find that during easier assignments, or after completion of the work, your child opens up and wants to talk to you about their life in school, so you can gain insights about their relationships with particular teachers and how they are feeling generally.
5. **It's a good gauge for how well your child is doing.** You'll soon identify which subjects they struggle with and others where they rarely ask for your help. If they have difficulties grasping the concepts of particular subjects, it may not be that they have a poor teacher, it may just be that they haven't yet connected with the teaching methods, or it may just be an area they are less gifted in – we all have blind spots.
6. **You gain knowledge.** Learning new topics alongside your child can be exciting, and revisiting subjects you studied yourself but have now forgotten all about can be surprisingly satisfying, even if you have to get over an initial anxiety.
7. **Team spirit.** Your child will often appreciate the solidarity by not having to face their homework alone. You're there as a mentor and for moral support.

Key things to remember

1. **It's your child's homework, not yours.** Sometimes going through questions and explaining the solution to them can help them with their understanding of a subject they may be finding it tricky to grasp. Patience and persistence are key.
2. **Try not to be persuaded to do their homework for them.** This will only make them feel better in the short-term, and teachers may be confused by steep variations between class and home performance.
3. **Ensure they are understanding basic concepts.** For thorough understanding, grasping fundamental precepts of a subject is a better method than memorizing things rote fashion.
4. **Allow them the time and space to get things wrong and to try again.** Gently nudge them in the right direction whenever they're really stuck.
5. **Be the peacekeeper.** Keep your cool on those occasions when tensions and frustrations bubble over!

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