



Homework Help

When your child was in first grade, homework was fun....at first. Then reality set in. It's not going way. As long as they're in school, they ALWAYS will be doing homework.

Is your child's homework a stressful nightly event at your house? Don't let it be! Most kids have difficulty with their homework from time to time. But you can help make it less traumatic by creating a positive routine around homework, and by encouraging your kids to use enjoyable and easy techniques to help them study. With practice and structure, homework time can be a positive experience for all of you!

Look for ways to make learning fun, while accomplishing the assignments. You may find that your kids learn more when they don't realize they are learning. Use practical everyday examples to help them learn. Take them along when you go to the grocery store. They can help figure out which sale item is a better deal. Let them bake with you. They'll probably forget they're doing fractions if it involves making brownies.

While homework can be frustrating for you and a struggle for your children, keep in mind, it is a valuable tool that goes far beyond classroom learning. It may be a chore, but it's an important aspect of your child's life.

By helping your kids establish a homework routine, they are creating the discipline and laying an important foundation necessary to navigate through years of required assignments and study hours and to reinforce classroom learning.

Make sure to support, encourage, and assist him if needed. If he knows you care, he will have a good reason to complete assignments and turn them in on time.

Why does your child need to do homework? In the early elementary grades, homework helps children develop good habits and attitudes. From third through sixth grades, small amounts of homework, gradually increased each year, may support improved academic achievement. In seventh grade and beyond, students who complete more homework score better on standardized tests and earn better grades, on the average, than students who do less homework. The difference in test scores and grades between students who do more homework and those who do less increases as children move up through the grades.

What's the right amount of homework? National Education Association along with the National PTA recommends 10 minutes of homework per night for each grade level. Thus, a first-grader gets a total of 10 minutes, a second-grader 20 minutes, a third-grader 30 minutes, and so on, not to exceed two hours per night total in high school.



Tips:

Set up your child for homework success by doing the following:

- Set a regular time.
- Pick a place.
- Remove distractions.
- Provide supplies and identify resources.
- Set a good example.
- Show an interest.

Helpful Links:

- **From US Department of Education:** Helping Your Child with Homework
 - <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/homework.html>
 - <http://www.nea.org/tools/16938.htm>
- Homework tip sheet:
 - http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Homework_Help/
- Homework survival for parents:
 - <http://www.empoweringparents.com/category-Motivation.php>
 - <http://www.minti.com/parenting-advice/9381/Homework-Survival-for-Parents/>

The Purpose of Cursive

Has the computer made handwriting obsolete? Is good penmanship passé? Should schools still teach cursive? No, no and yes!

While some schools are no longer teaching cursive beyond elementary, proper handwriting still has its place in education. Yes, more and more students use computers for their assignments. However, keyboarding skills don't help them during written exams or tests, or when taking class notes.

Sure, printing is an alternative, but when time is limited, cursive writing is quicker and more fluid because the pen doesn't leave the page as much as with printing, and there are fewer stops and starts. Therefore, you can write more during an exam, or take down more of what the teacher said during class.

Advantages of learning cursive:

- It's faster than printing, therefore more efficient for taking notes.
- It's written without the use of technology.
- It helps further develop fine motor skills.
- It's much more personal when writing letters, or in journals.
- A handwritten apology is more meaningful than one typed on a computer.

It does take time to learn, however, and can frustrate some kids, especially those who may have issues with fine motor skills. Though, various activities such as tracing, stringing beads, and cutting, can help get your child ready for handwriting.

To start, teach them how to hold the pencil. It needs to rest on their ring finger with the eraser pointed back toward their shoulder. Emphasize that they need to keep the pencil on the paper. This will help them master the skill.

At first have your child make strokes that are the letter shapes. Then have him work on letters that are similar to printed ones such as the printed and cursive version of a or c: (a or c.). Have them use the special paper that has two solid lines with a dashed line in the middle. Help with letter practice by creating letters out of dashed lines so your child can trace them.

Tips:

- Good writing is based on a pattern of ovals and parallel lines o / o / o /
- All the downstrokes are parallel – m h n a d f t
- All similar letters are the same height – r o n c u, l h b k d
- All downstrokes are equidistant – minimum
- The space between words is the width of the small letter o – willoyouobeomine
- Ascending and descending letters are no more than twice the height of small letters, preferably less – h g l p d
- Letters, which finish at the top, join horizontally – o r v w t f
- Letters, which finish at the bottom, join diagonally – a c d e h l

Source: <http://quilljar.users.btopenworld.com/rules.html>

The Facts about Math

Have you ever heard your child say, “I’m not good at math”? or “Math is hard”? You’re not the first parent to hear this, and certainly won’t be the last. But, how you respond to these statements can make or break your child’s perception of math. Your job is to help make math as positive as possible. Your feelings will have an impact on how your child thinks about math. Do you like math, or do you consider yourself good at it? If the answer is no, you could be coloring his or her perception of this very important subject.

Math is more critical than ever. Not only are “No Child Left Behind Act” standards demanding more math skills, but colleges are also expecting higher levels of math. Careers that placed little emphasis on math in the past are now adding math skills to requirements.

Math is more than counting! Everything involves math of some sort. It is present in different forms whenever we pick up the phone, travel somewhere, tell time or play a game. All subjects are linked with math including physics, statistics, chemistry and biology. It is used in architecture and designing, as well as in many forms of businesses.



So no matter what your child wants to do when he or she grows up, they will need to be proficient in math. Of course, not everything they learn in school will be needed later, but you never know what they will need, so the more math they know and have to build on, the better off you'll be.

If it isn't already, math will become very real to your child when he or she starts receiving an allowance or is paid to mow the neighbor's lawn. Then they'll be glad they did their math homework. So, do the math!

Math by grade level

Kindergarten/First Grade

On a basic level your child needs to be able to count, add and subtract, sort and match. They will start to learn how to compare, do some simple fractions and estimate. Practice counting, comparing, adding and subtracting numbers with them.

Second/Third Grade

In addition to adding and subtracting, your child will also be expected to learn their multiplication tables and division. They should be able to add and subtract coins and understand basic word problems. Additionally, they should be able to read numbers from 0 to 1000, as well as be able to compare and order these numbers and mentally add and subtract numbers up to around 20.

Fourth/Fifth Grade

At this point, your child should have mastered their multiplication facts up to 12; understand and identify geometric shapes and patterns; be comfortable with place values; use measurement terms such as inches, feet, yards and meters; make accurate measurements; and have a solid understanding of temperature and time. They also should be able to add and subtract fractions with unlike denominators, determine ratios and complete word problems.

Middle School Math

Middle school is a critical time for building the math skills required in high school, college, work, and everyday life. It is designed for your children to be able to solve real world problems, explain their thinking to others, identify and analyze data trends, as well as use modern technology.

To help middle school students master complex math concepts, the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Department of Education established the "Figure This" <http://www.figurethis.org/index.html> campaign. On this site, your child can choose from various challenges, each designed to promote their skills in algebra, geometry, measurement, numbers, statistics, or probability.

Tips:

Look for real world examples to make math fun. Here are some suggestions:



- Have your child figure out the percentage of fat in the yogurt they're about to eat.
- If you're at a restaurant, have them determine what the tip should be.
- When you go to the mall, ask your child what he or she would pay for something they want if it is discounted by 25 percent.
- Have your child calculate how much paint you will need to cover all of the walls in their room.
- Ask them to estimate simple and compound interest for the money in their bank account.

Helpful Links:

- Math Homework Help
 - <http://www.nea.org/tools/10381.htm>
- Math lessons for kindergarten – eight grade:
 - <http://www.aaamath.com/index.html>
- Practice math skills for pre-k – fifth grade:
 - <http://www.ixl.com/math/practice/>
- Improve Math Skills/Games
 - <http://www.aplusmath.com/>
- Basic Math Games
 - <http://www.abc.net.au/countusin/default.htm>
- Make Math Fun
 - <http://www.mathsisfun.com/>
- Math Dictionary
 - <http://www.amathsdictionaryforkids.com/>