

HELPING CHILDREN WITH HOMEWORK



Many children think of homework as punishment rather than as a reinforcement for the learning done during the school day. Although designed to help children develop a sense of discipline and organization, homework can trigger a power struggle between adult and child.

Constant nagging and children's avoidance of homework can generate negative attitudes toward schoolwork done at home. The following tips on assisting children with their homework will help adults approach this task more positively.

✓ Make sure children have a consistent quiet time for doing their homework.

Decide together on a particular time to do homework each day. The length of this quiet time will vary with children's ages and the amount of homework. For example, 6:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. could be set aside every night for a 12-year old, with less time for younger children and more time for older children. Homework should be completed during the quiet time. If the child finishes the homework before the allotted time is over, pleasure reading may be done. If the child's favorite television show occurs during this time, the quiet time can be rearranged for that night to accommodate the child. Adults can model appropriate behavior for children by reading during this quiet time instead of watching television.



✓ Help children complete one or two examples in their homework--not every problem or question.

When a child turns in homework that is done accurately, the teacher assumes the child understands the material. If the child does not really understand the material because the homework was finished by someone else, the child may become frustrated and perform poorly on subsequent assignments. How does this tip help the child? The child gets some attention from the adult but also develops independence in completing projects on her or his own. Teachers see the mistakes the child makes on homework and can appropriately chart the child's progress in understanding concepts.



✓ Help children organize a time frame for difficult homework and long-term projects.

Science projects and term papers cannot be done overnight. Help children set up specific goals for long-term assignments, such as setting up a specific date to have information gathered. Difficult homework may require more structured study breaks and may need to be done early in the evening when the child is more rested. Help children break projects into smaller steps that do not seem so overwhelming to them.