

Visit With The Utays

Advanced Homework Taming

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I don't believe it! The year has barely started and we're already fighting about homework. Discussing it calmly doesn't work. Threats and consequences only work temporarily. What should we do?

Questions like this are rampant! Are there nightly discussions over when homework is to be done? Is homework rushed and when you suggest redoing, they balk? Are arguments that arise before or during homework interfering with your relationship not only with your child but spouse too? Are homework, books, and other needed materials “forgotten” and left at school? Are peers spending much **less** time on homework? Do your children insist that they can (and in fact some do) work better with a TV on or music playing? Is the first time you hear about a major project the night before it is due? Parents are wise to deal with this now before the school year gets any further under way and bad habits become ingrained.

Fortunately, there are things you can do. **Consider the basics.** Set up a study area with all necessary supplies. Establish a set daily homework time for school-related activities even when there is no homework assigned. Encourage your child use an assignment notebook and to follow up by actually doing the homework. Remember to praise your child's efforts at doing the homework independently. If these seem overly obvious, re-read these ideas and ask yourself, “Do I **really** do this?”

If you need something more “advanced,” we suggest doing the following, in order. Start with the first idea and if it works then there is no need to do more. If needed, continue down the list until homework is, if not problem free, at least much more tolerable for all involved.

1. Add agreed-upon incentives to do it and negative consequences for not.
2. Do number 1 again **except** this time be consistent!
3. Conference with the teacher to find out what s/he expects from homework, how long

homework should take, how assignments are given (verbally, written on the board, given as handouts, etc.) and policies toward such things as neatness, typed vs. handwritten, etc. You want to leave being better able to respond intelligently to your child's pleas: “This is good enough. This is all the teacher really wants us to do. He never looks at these anyway. Neatness doesn't count. We're suppose to only do that in class.”

4. If after putting the information you learned from the teacher(s) into practice, homework is still more of a battle than you know is reasonable, it's time to **call for reinforcements**. Maybe your child is bright and able to cover up a learning disability (or as we prefer, “learning difference”). Or, maybe there are simply gaps in learning that need to be filled. Or, perhaps your child just needs someone **besides you** helping with homework **or teaching study skills**. Or, weak attention may be the real problem. Or, maybe there's something bothering your child that really has nothing to do with homework directly.

So, if after revisiting the basics, talking to your child's teacher, and doing everything you know to do, homework is still a problem, the next step is to call for those reinforcements. Have your child professionally evaluated either inside or outside the school system. Or, find someone else to supervise homework. Churches, schools and learning centers may have supervised homework centers. Make sure there is a certified teacher and studying is part of homework time. **Don't let this problem go on too long.** These habits will be harder to break in the spring. And, if this **isn't** a new issue for you and your family, all the more reason to do something now to prepare today for success tomorrow.