

Visit With The Utays

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School Psychology and Education Specialists

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Parents and Homework:

How much is too much help?

I am anxiously awaiting my grades for the first nine-week grading period. Actually, they are my son's grades, not mine. I don't think I should be so involved. Just what should my role be in homework? When does help cross the line and become too much help?

There do exist children who independently schedule, complete, and turn in their homework. This is no urban myth, though to parents like yourself it certainly must sound mythical. Caring parents often take on the role of re-teaching material not learned in school. There are parents who are pathologically over involved and purposefully create a dependency to serve their own fragile egos. Much more common are parents like you who view helping too much as not actually helpful at all. As long as you continue seeking balance, not dependency, you are on the right path.

How much is too much help? Talking to your child about their work and double checking that they understand what to do, and how to do it, is appropriate. Checking afterward (not necessarily every assignment) for accuracy and relative neatness is also helpful. Teaching how to do most assignments or having to sit with your child during the entire homework time is too much and symptomatic of a bigger problem.

Most children will complain sometimes of too much homework or that they need more help from you than usual. When this becomes a habit, the following are some ideas to consider in helping your child become more appropriately independent with homework.

1. Encourage proofing their own work by giving some, but limited, direction and examples. For example, check punctuation in just the first paragraph or correct one typical math problem.

2. If motivation is the problem, try an incentive. Start with just one or two subjects and build from there one small successful step at a time.
3. Students should have at least 70 percent of an independently completed homework assignment correct. If your child cannot achieve that level of success without a great deal of support from you, then the homework assigned may be inappropriate for your child.
4. If your child spends an inordinate amount of time on homework *even if correct*, there could be a problem. Again, make sure the assignment is appropriate for your child.

If these are not enough, then it is time to get professional help. First, check with the teacher. Then, if needed, consult another source like a learning center that offers both academic and emotional support to help you and your child figure out exactly what is going on and what to do about it. Helping your child balance a) asking for and getting help with b) completing homework as independently as possible, is one more way to help them prepare today for success tomorrow.

Please ask! For more information and great websites to help with education challenges, visit the Total Learning Center website: www.TotalLearningCenter.com or call (724) 940-1090 for a free copy of a TLC cd full of useful information for parents.

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