

## Overcome Academic Challenges: Homework

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### How can I make homework time more fun for my child at the end of a long school day?

We really want to make homework as pleasurable as possible but, frankly, for some kids it's never going to be really great.

One of the mistakes parents make is that they want to micromanage homework time, and that never goes well. To make it a better experience, your role is to help your child understand the directions and then walk away. Make sure the child can do the work, but you don't want to be sitting next to him or her. When it's done, you want to check for completion not correct-

ness. In the role of a coach, it's going to go better, rather than asking to check every last problem.

There's also a lot of great research in the area of movement and homework. Research shows that if your student gets up and moving, they learn better. The act of movement increases retention by about thirty percent.

### How can I help my child turn in completed homework?

That is so frustrating for everyone involved. Sometimes it has to do with the teacher's expectations. It's important to know how the teacher is asking for the homework. Sometimes, the way the math teacher wants homework is really different from how the social studies teacher asks for it. When it's left up to the child to remember the difference, it usually doesn't go well for the student with ADHD.



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First, ask the teacher about how he or she wants homework turned in. Then, sit down with your child. Rather than telling him how to turn it in, let him come up with a few ideas and then decide on a course of action. Let the teacher know about the plan and then check back with the teacher at the end of the week. If the original idea didn't work, then help the child come up with a way that will work.

### How much should we help our children with their school work?

Our role as parents in a perfect world is to help our kids get started. The problem is you don't always know if they're really doing it. And it's really different when your child has ADHD.

With my son, he has to do his homework before I come home, and then it is his job to show me the completed homework and the online verification from the teacher. My job is just to check, not to correct it. I figure, it's his homework, not mine, and he needs to do it. I make sure it's done; that's how I sleep at night. If he does all this, he gets a check mark and a check equals a privilege on the weekend, like going to the coffee shop with friends or to a high school football game.

A friend has her daughter's phone. Her daughter needs to come home and do her homework, but more importantly, she needs to chunk long-term assignments. The daughter then needs to complete just one chunk of the assignment in order to be able to use her cellphone.

Sometimes finding what you can leverage fairly is the magic bullet for motivating kids to do their homework.

### How much time should homework take?

The rule of thumb is homework should be ten minutes per grade level, plus the time they read at night. A second grader should have twenty minutes plus the time she reads, a sixth grader should have an hour plus the time he reads. Research has shown homework doesn't make smarter kids, especially in the lower grades. We begin to see the positive effects of homework in high school.

After an hour and a half, we see diminishing returns with homework. More than that and they're really not gaining academically. Many kids are reporting more than three hours of homework. Throw in ADHD on top of that, and you have a recipe for disaster. Sometimes parents aren't really forthcoming with teachers about the amount of homework being done, and that's really important. As parents, we need to let the teacher know what is happening. If the teacher knows, she can make accommodations. 🗨️

**Karen Sampson Hoffman, MA**, is the coordinator of the NRC's Ask the Expert webinar series.

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