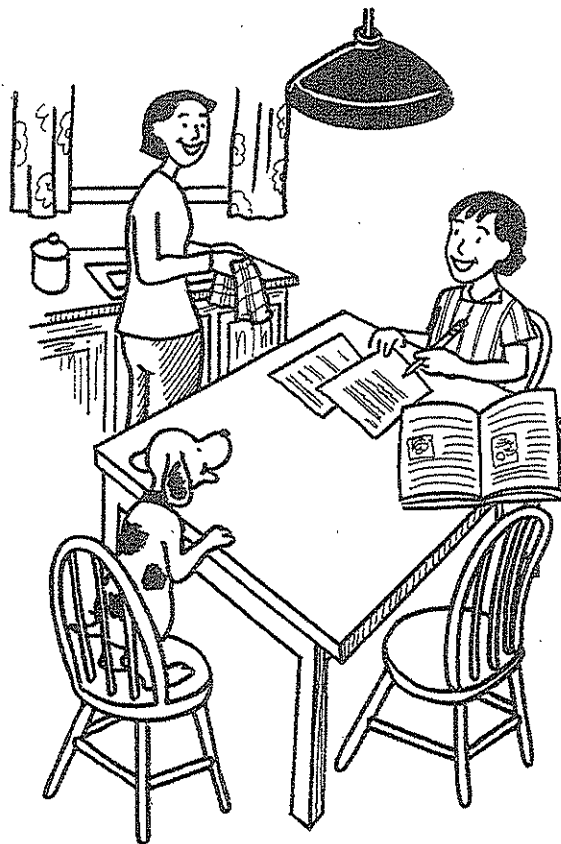


Whose homework is this, anyway?

You've seen your child stare blankly at his homework. Or maybe your youngster has a hard time settling down and getting started.

You know that homework is an important part of learning, but how involved should you be? Too much concern may cause kids to depend too heavily on their parents. Too little concern may let academic problems go unnoticed.

This report will show parents and kids how to work together for study success—and avoid the question, “Whose homework is this, anyway?”

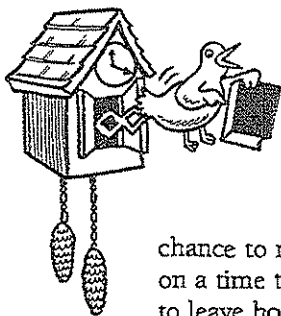


What your child can do

Homework improves grades, teaches study skills, and increases learning. That's why it's important for students to complete their homework. Here's how your child can get the job done.

Get assignments

Remind your youngster that it's his job to write down assignments. He may need to copy them from the blackboard. (Some schools post assignments on Web sites or record them on homework hotlines.) He should bring home his assignments, including instructions and handouts, the day they're given.



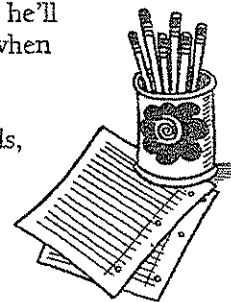
Keep a routine

Encourage your child to begin homework at the same time each day to make learning a habit. What time is best? Possibilities include immediately after school or later in the evening when she's had a chance to relax and eat a snack. Together, decide on a time that's best for her. Just don't allow her to leave homework until bedtime.

Create a study area

Many kids work best in a special study area, like at a bedroom desk or the kitchen table. However, some children do

better sprawling on the living room floor. Consider letting your child decide where he'll work—he's more likely to stay on task when he's comfortable. His work area should have adequate lighting and a stash of homework supplies, such as pens, pencils, paper, and a dictionary.



Make a plan

With your youngster, glance over her homework and help her come up with a study plan. Suggest that she tackle tougher or longer assignments first while she's fresh and alert. She should be able to follow most homework instructions without supervision, but let her know you're available if she needs you.

Increase concentration

Some children need calm surroundings to focus on homework. Others may study better with background music. But television is usually too much for anyone to ignore. Your youngster should keep the TV off during study time so his mind is tuned in to his homework.

continued



Plan for long-term projects

Encourage your child to use a calendar to help her plan projects. Have her divide each project into steps and write them on the calendar. (She may need your help breaking the assignment into chunks and choosing deadlines.) *Tip:* Writing daily assignments, as well as long-term projects, on a calendar may help her stay on schedule.

Find ways to improve

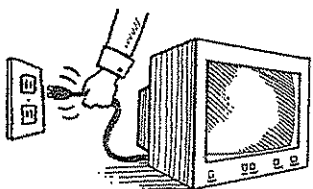
When graded homework is returned, look for notes written by the teacher. These tell you if your youngster understood the assignment. If he received a poor grade, ask him to think about the reasons. Did he copy the assignment correctly? Did he follow the instructions? Discovering what went wrong can keep him from repeating mistakes.

What you can do

The key is for you to stay involved and monitor your youngster's homework without doing it for her. Consider these suggestions.

Ask about assignments

Before your child begins to study, find out if she knows what she needs to do and when it should be finished. Asking about assignments reminds your child that schoolwork is important. Help her gather supplies (index cards, poster board, etc.), and provide her with additional resources (Internet access, library research) if she needs them.



Maintain a schedule

Whenever possible, match your household's schedule with your child's study time. If homework is done from 6 to 7 p.m. each day, make this a quiet time

for the entire family. Work alongside your child (read a book or balance the checkbook) while he studies. This will help him stay focused.

Offer support

For younger students, it's helpful to walk them through one or two problems to show how the work should be done. You should guide older children in the right direction rather than providing the answers. For example, instead of answering her question, "Mom, how many feet are in a mile?" ask, "Where do you think we can find out?" Your youngster will learn to work independently.

Give reminders

A simple prompt, such as "Finished that poem?" may be all that's needed to encourage your child to complete a project. But watch for signs that he's frustrated or seems to be spending too much time on his homework. If your youngster consistently has trouble with assignments, ask the teacher for advice.

Check homework

When she's finished, take a moment to inspect your child's work. Your looking at her assignments increases the chance that she will complete them. Make sure the work is neat (writing is readable and organized) and complete. It's okay to point out misspelled words or other errors. But you shouldn't correct her work—that's your child's responsibility. And mistakes show the teacher where your youngster needs help.

Provide praise

As your youngster completes assignments, tell him how proud you are. Praising hard work as you notice it encourages your child to keep learning. A warm comment, such as "Nice job on those math problems," can give him confidence when he tackles his spelling homework. The right attitude can make a big difference.

Team with teachers

Ask your child's teachers about homework rules and how you can help with assignments. Find out what kinds of projects your child should expect. Provide your phone number, and e-mail address if available, and encourage the teacher to contact you if problems arise. The sooner you are aware of a problem, the more quickly a solution can be found.



Remember: With your guidance and encouragement, your youngster will learn how to work independently and plan for success.

Home & School CONNECTION