



Tips and Tricks for Homework Time

For parents

Establish a routine

- ⓐ Talk with your child to determine the best time to do homework (before or after dinner).
- ⓐ Talk with your child to determine the best place to do homework (bedroom, dining room, etc.).
- ⓐ Provide your child with a workspace that has the fewest possible distractions (e.g., no children playing nearby, uncluttered work table, turn off the TV, restrict access to cell phone, iPod and social networks like Facebook).
- ⓐ Some children/teens are unable to concentrate with soft background music, while others work better with it.
- ⓐ As a parent, it is up to you to talk about this with your child/teen and to do a few tests to determine the most suitable option. Help your child/teen follow the established routine.
- ⓐ If your child concentrates better while moving around, let them do so and focus their efforts on their schoolwork.

Plan out their schoolwork

- ⓐ There is no sense in trying to do everything in a single evening: spread their schoolwork out over the entire week, according to the child's class tests and leisure activities.
- ⓐ Use a calendar with large squares (e.g., a garage calendar) and sticky notes to divide their homework over the week: For example: Monday = spelling (first 10 words); Tuesday = multiplication table; Wednesday = reading; Thursday = review.
- ⓐ Secondary school students can use the calendar to plan out their homework assignments, projects and tests in order to see the entire month at a glance.



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Developed by Clinique FOCUS under the coordination of Katia Sirois, DPsy, in collaboration with Johanne Perreault, DPsy.

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Inspired by *Les Incroyables Attentifs*, a group dedicated to attention stimulation and management, in collaboration with France Laliberté, Marie-Andrée Lessard and Katia Sirois, IRDPQ.

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Set limits

- Ⓢ Homework time that stretches out for 2 hours is too long. Talk with the teacher to find out their expectations and to get help with prioritizing the work to be done.
- Ⓢ Help your child divide up the work in a series of smaller steps.
- Ⓢ It is sometimes helpful to schedule a break, especially for children who have trouble sitting still (e.g., 20 minutes of study, then a 5-minute break to stretch).

Help your child get organized

- Ⓢ Put together a kit of supplies they need to do their homework. If necessary, keep duplicate school supplies at home for their homework (if your child tends to forget things at school).
- Ⓢ Start with the least interesting or most difficult tasks and finish up with the easiest and most interesting, like topping off a meal with a good dessert!

Be firm but flexible

- Ⓢ Let your child know what you expect from them.
- Ⓢ Be careful not to play the role of teacher with your child.
- Ⓢ Being firm doesn't mean being rigid: if your child is tired, there is no sense in keeping at it because they'll simply stop learning.

Don't hesitate to ask for help

- Ⓢ If necessary, arrange a buddy system with a friend or an older student.
- Ⓢ Assess the possibility of using an outside resource to help supervise your child's homework time and to foster a more positive and relaxed atmosphere at home. For example, many schools have after-school homework or tutoring programs allowing children to do their homework under supervision at school.

Give your child the right to make mistakes

- Ⓢ Do not correct your child's homework if you spot mistakes.
- Ⓢ Tell yourself that if you correct all your child's mistakes, the teacher won't know what needs further clarification.
- Ⓢ Reinforce your child's efforts not only their results.

Be interested and available



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- Ⓢ Parents' interest in their child's studies is one of the best guarantees of success.
- Ⓢ Praise your child when they work well.
- Ⓢ Arrange a simple, immediate and easy-to-manage reward system for satisfactory homework (e.g., privilege of getting 15 minutes to spend on a favourite activity that evening). Your child will sense that you are paying special attention to the work they are doing.

Keep in touch with your child's teacher

- Ⓢ Check your child's homework, based on clear and realistic criteria defined with the teacher.
- Ⓢ Find an easy and effective way to communicate with the teacher (e.g. notebook, agenda). You can jot down any problems that occurred, along with your child's special efforts.

For children/teens with ADHD

What books do I need to do my homework?

- Ⓢ Make a list of the books or notebooks that you need to take home every day and put the list in a visible place on your schoolbag or in your desk at school. You can ask a parent to plasticize the sheet of paper.

Where should I do my homework?

- Ⓢ A calm place with the fewest possible distractions: a place at home where there is the least noise, traffic and visual distractions;
- Ⓢ A pleasant area conducive to studying: a well-lit and well-ventilated corner.
- Ⓢ Keep your workspace free of unnecessary objects (including screens giving you access to social media).
- Ⓢ Work in a physical position conducive to action (not on your bed or on a cushy sofa). Sitting slightly bent over the table will encourage you to attack your work.
- Ⓢ If you are a music lover, playing soft music may help you to better concentrate.

When should I do my homework?



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- Ⓢ Do it at a set time every day (e.g., from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.).

How should I do my homework?

- Ⓢ Write down your schoolwork and tests on a page of a monthly calendar so that you plan in advance what you need to do.
- Ⓢ Divide up your work in time slots rather than work to accomplish (e.g., take a 5- to 10-minute break after each 30-minute period of non-stop work or do 30 minutes before dinner and 30 minutes after).
- Ⓢ Be active: use a marker or coloured pencil to identify the important points of a question or text, draw asterisks, use underlining or write notes in the margins to identify the important points.
- Ⓢ Use self-talk (speaking silently in your head) to break down the tasks to do or to explain a complex problem to yourself.
- Ⓢ If ideas unrelated to your work pop into your head, write them down on a notepad and put a STOP sign in your head and keep working.
- Ⓢ If you feel like raising your head each time you hear a noise, force yourself to keep your eyes glued to your worksheet.
- Ⓢ Congratulate yourself each time you do good work, each time you finish an assignment.

Tips to improve your memory retention

- Ⓢ **CALENDAR:** Put a monthly calendar in plain sight and write down when your assignments are due and your upcoming tests so that you can plan your work and studies a few days in advance.
- Ⓢ **SELF-REPETITION:** Repeat several times, in your head and out loud, what you need to memorize. You can even record the information you need to memorize and then listen to it several times. You can also ask someone else (parent, friend) to read the text aloud several times.



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- Ⓢ **LOCATION METHOD:** Associate each item of information you need to retain with a mental image such as a room in your house or a specific place (e.g., an owl in the fridge; a head of cabbage in the living room, a knee under the bed). When it is time to recall that information, mentally review the rooms of your house with the words that you mentally placed there.

- Ⓢ **SONG:** Learn a list of words, a grammar rule or a theory to a well-known tune.

- Ⓢ **STORY:** Learn the information by linking the different elements into a story.

- Ⓢ **DRAWING:** Learn information by drawing sketches, tables, charts or graphs highlighting the important points to remember. Feel free to use lots of different colours.

- Ⓢ **ACRONYMS:** Learn a list of elements by using the first letter of each word. For example, to remember the names of the eight planets, memorize this line: **My Very Educated Mother Just Served Us Nachos** → **Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune**).

- Ⓢ **TEACHER:** To make sure that you have understood your lessons well, reserve a special time with one of your parents or your brother or sister and ask them to be your students. You become the teacher and explain to them what you have learned.

All these tips and tricks clearly won't suit everybody. The most effective ones will probably be those you discover yourself!



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