

PARENT HANDOUT: HOMEWORK HELP



WHAT IS HOMEWORK HELP?

- ▶ Many families say that their children do not like doing homework. Homework can be extra challenging for children with ADHD, because they often have difficulty paying attention, sitting still, doing tasks they dislike, and/or managing negative feelings.
- ▶ Homework Help is a set of strategies parents can use to make homework time easier for the whole family. It includes tips for increasing organization, creating homework routines, providing support and supervision, and breaking assignments down into smaller steps. In combination with the other skills in this guide, Homework Help techniques can help you support your child and make homework time less frustrating and more productive.

HERE'S HOW TO PROVIDE HOMEWORK HELP AT HOME

- 1 Use organizational tools to keep track of assignments, projects, and tests.**
 - a** Help your child stay on top of their schoolwork, due dates, and daily activities by using planners, calendars, and "to do" lists. At the start of each school year, help your child create a simple and clear system to keep track of important information. For example, your child can write down each week's events in a planner, put new homework assignments in a red folder, and store finished assignments in a green folder.
 - b** Give your child daily reminders to update their "to do" list and follow their schedule. For more tips, review the chapters on Remembering Things I Need to Do (ADHD Skill 5) and How to Organize My Stuff (ADHD Skill 7).
- 2 Create detailed homework routines.**
 - a** Tasks are easier to do when they are part of a regular routine. Help your child create a daily homework routine, including where they will do it, what time they will do it, and how they will prioritize their assignments. See our example for ideas.
 - b** Think through the routine details together to make sure that you and your child are on the same page. For example, is your child's homework space quiet and distraction-free? Do they have access to the materials they need there (e.g., pens, pencils, calculator, etc.)? When scheduling homework time, do they need a break between when they get home from school and when they start working? If they get stuck or need help, what should they do?
 - c** Encourage your child to stick to the routine every day. The more consistent the routine is, the easier it will be for them to get in the habit of doing homework every day and not waiting until the last minute.

3 Provide support and supervision.

- a The younger your child is, the more homework support they will need. Younger children may do better if you keep them company while they work and walk through their assignments with them. Older children may be fine with having you nearby to answer any questions. Children of all ages benefit from check-ins and encouragement to stay on task.
- b If possible, look over your child's homework to be sure they are doing it correctly and did not skip any of it. This encourages your child to be thorough and decreases the chances they will put the work off until another time.
- c Make sure your child's routine includes turning in completed work. You can create a "Backpack Checklist" of what should go into your child's backpack each night before bed, which you can check as part of your child's bedtime routine. If your child has a hard time turning homework in, you can ask their teacher to monitor their performance and give feedback to you, or use the Daily School Check-In (ADHD Skill 3) to incorporate rewards and give your child an extra push. See our example, and then make your own routine.

4 Break bigger assignments or projects down into smaller steps.

- a It can be overwhelming to tackle a difficult or big assignment, such as a school project or studying for a test. First, make sure your child understands the assignment. If they don't, walk through it with them or help them problem solve how to figure out what they need to do.
- b Then, help your child turn a big assignment into smaller, more manageable assignments and accurately estimate how much time they need for each step (see ADHD Skill 6, How to Get Things Done, and ADHD Skill 8, How to Manage My Time, for tips). Encourage your child to take short breaks as needed to stretch or do an in-place exercise (like jumping jacks) or have a small snack before going back to work.

5 Inspect and improve your routine

- a Every few weeks, review your child's homework routine to evaluate what's working well and what needs fine-tuning. Work with your child to identify ways to make homework time easier.

6 Notice when your child is working hard and offer praise and encouragement.

- a Remember it can take time to build good homework skills and your child may not be able to do their homework independently right away. Your support can make a big difference. Offer encouraging reminders and praise until new strategies become easier to use. Be patient with your child and yourself, and show your child you are confident that they can get their homework done carefully and correctly!

Sofia's Homework Routine

- ▶ Routine starts when you get home from school around 3:30 pm.
- ▶ Take a 30-minute break for a snack and relaxation.
- ▶ Get your planner and homework materials. Ask dad if you're unsure what you need.
- ▶ Eliminate distractions. Turn off TV and music, put away phone.
- ▶ Sit down at your desk.
- ▶ Do homework until dinner at 5:30. If you need a stretch break, set the timer for 5 minutes, then start your homework again.
- ▶ After dinner, bring homework to dad for him to review.
- ▶ Put your finished homework in your homework folder.
- ▶ Put your planner and homework folder back into your backpack.
- ▶ Put your backpack by the front door.
- ▶ Great job! Do something you enjoy for 30 minutes.

PARENT HANDOUT: HOMEWORK HELP TIPS



HOW CAN HOMEWORK HELP STRATEGIES HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Many parents and children find that homework time is a stressful time. Homework is a task that can lead to frustration, annoyance, and even arguments at home. Doing schoolwork can be especially challenging for children with ADHD, as it requires using many different skills at the same time, such as working memory, organization, planning, and time management.
- ▶ By making homework time more structured, predictable, and organized, parents can help their children strengthen their own abilities. As children build skills and independence, they often feel better about school and themselves. This can make your child happier and make homework time easier for the whole family.

COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

My child refuses to do homework!

One way to motivate your child to do homework is to allow them to do something they enjoy once they finish, such as talking to a friend or spending individual time with you. You may also want to incorporate consequences into your approach, such as the loss of a privilege for not following homework rules (e.g., if your child does not do their homework, they lose the ability to watch TV that night).

Another approach involves creating a homework contract that you and your child create together. It can include what your child agrees to do (e.g., I will write my homework assignments in my planner before leaving class; If I don't understand what I need to do, I will ask my teacher) and what parents will agree to (e.g., We will provide you with the school supplies you need to do your work; If you are having a hard time, we will check in with your teacher).

My child gets too much homework, and they can never finish it all.

Different schools and teachers approach homework in different ways. Talk to your child's teacher(s) about your child's learning style and homework challenges. You can decide together how much homework is necessary and if there are ways to lower the amount while still reinforcing important concepts (e.g., completing part of a worksheet). You can then review these expectations with your child and problem solve together.

My child's homework is complicated, and I'm not sure how to help them with it.

This is something many parents say! It can be hard to keep up with all of the different topics children learn about in school, especially if they aren't subjects you've thought about lately or studied yourself. Start by seeing what your child's school provides. Many schools offer learning support, like homework club or after school tutoring, and teachers are often willing to spend extra time explaining tricky concepts to students. Your child's friends may also be able to help; many students find that their peers are a great resource for understanding what happened in class and how to tackle a hard assignment!



