

How to Help: Monitor Assignments -- Helping Your Child With Homework

Children are more likely to complete homework successfully when parents monitor their assignments. How closely you need to monitor your child depends upon her age, how independent she is and how well she does in school. Whatever the age of your child, if she is not getting assignments done satisfactorily, she requires more supervision.

Here are some ways to monitor your child's assignments.

Ask about the School's Homework Policy

At the start of the school year, ask your child's teacher about any rules or guidelines that children are expected to follow as they complete homework. Ask about the kinds of assignments that will be given and the purposes for the assignments.

Talk with the teacher about your role in helping with homework. Expectations for parent involvement vary from teacher to teacher. Some teachers want parents to monitor homework closely, whereas others want them simply to check to make sure the assignment is completed on time.

Ask the teacher to call if any problems with homework come up. Let her know that you will do the same.

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Be Available

Many elementary school students often like to have someone with them to answer questions as they work on assignments. If your child is cared for by someone else, talk to that caregiver about how to deal with homework. For an older child, if no one will be around, let him know when you want him to begin work and call to remind him if necessary.

However, if the teacher has made it known that students are to do homework on their own, limit your assistance to your child to assuring that assignments are clear and that necessary supplies are provided. Too much parent involvement can make children dependent-and takes away from the value of homework as a way for children to become independent and responsible.



Look over Completed Assignments

It's usually a good idea to check to see that your elementary school child has finished her assignments. If your middle-school student is having trouble finishing assignments, check his work, too. After the teacher returns completed homework, read the comments to see if your child has done the assignment satisfactorily.

Monitor Time Spent Viewing TV and Playing Video Games

American children on average spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework. In many homes, more homework gets done when TV viewing and "game" time is limited.

Once you and your child have worked out a homework schedule, take time to discuss how much TV and what programs she can watch. It's worth noting that television can be a learning tool. Look for programs that relate to what your child is studying in school, such as programs on history or science or dramatizations of children's literature. When you can, watch shows with your child, discuss them and encourage follow-up activities such as reading or a trip to the museum.

Likewise, limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. As with TV programs, be aware of the games she likes to play and discuss her choices with her.