

Increasing Motivation To Do Homework

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Do your children struggle to get their homework done each day? Do they refuse to do it sometimes? If you are in the habit of struggling with your kids over homework, it's no fun for anyone.

The good news is you can change these dynamics! One school counselor reported that she saw many kids who refused to do their homework. When she asked what they would do if their parents left homework up to them, almost all the kids replied they would do their homework. They explained they did not want to disappoint their teachers, miss their recess time or be embarrassed by not having it done.



Removing Power Struggles Over Homework

When your kids focus on resisting you, they can't feel these internal motivations. How can you reduce your children's resistance and increase the likelihood of their homework getting done?

Remove yourself from the equation by saying something like this. *"I realize when I try to make you do your homework both of us end up feeling bad. From now on I'm going to leave your homework up to you. I have faith that you can work out any issues around getting your homework done with your teacher. I want you to be successful in school so you are welcome to watch TV or play video games after you do your homework. However, it's up to you to decide when and if you do your homework."*

Asking questions is another way to help your child think through possible consequences.

- *How will you respond when your teacher asks you for your homework?*
- *What does your teacher do when kids don't have their homework done?*
- *Does your homework have any effect on your grade? What grade would you like to have?*

It's critical to ask these questions with calm curiosity instead of anger. By doing this you leave the responsibility of figuring out how to handle homework with your child.

How Involved Should You Be in Homework?

Let your child request your help if needed. Establish times when you are available to help like from 3:00 – 5:00 and 7:00 – 8:00. Set boundaries to avoid feeling overwhelmed by things like trying to prepare dinner while also helping with homework.

Make sure your kids realize that their homework is their responsibility. If you become too involved, you send the unspoken message that your children's work is not good enough. Also your children's teachers need to see your kids' work to gauge their understanding of the material.

One mom realized she was establishing a dangerous pattern by checking over her daughter's math homework every night. One day she missed her daughter's mistake and the teacher marked the answer as wrong. The daughter stormed home complaining "You made a mistake!" This mom quickly realized that checking over her homework needed to be her daughter's responsibility not hers.

Increasing Homework Motivation by Making It a Game

Difficult tasks like homework become more engaging if they involve the attributes of a game:

- Focus on accomplishing tasks to win
- Time limit
- Scoring
- Prizes

Your kids can make homework more like a game by doing the following:

- Write down the homework tasks.
- For each task, write down the time they think it will take.
- Set a timer for a task. If it's accomplished before the timer goes off, score one point.
- Determine the prize for the points. It can be as simple as running outside and shooting 10 baskets or eating three strawberries.
- Check that item off and go to the next task.

By transforming homework into a game, they will have more fun doing it. They will also gain the important life skill of writing down what needs to get done and checking it off once it's done.

Some parents have found [The Pomodoro Technique](#) helpful for their kids. This time management idea involves breaking tasks into 25 minute chunks with 5 minute breaks in between. Having kids set a timer gives them a sense of control plus feedback on the time left. When kids can work uninterrupted on a task, they get far more done.

Getting Some Exercise Before Doing Homework

If your child is struggling to get started on a homework assignment, an exercise break might just be the answer. This is especially true if your child is feeling angry, frustrated or overwhelmed.

In their book, [The Whole-Brain Child](#), Siegel and Bryson explain why this works. "Research shows that when we change our physical state - through movement or relaxation - we change our emotional state. ... The next time your children need help calming down or regaining control, look for ways to get them moving."

They tell the story of a 10-year-old boy who used this strategy when he was feeling extremely frustrated with all his homework. When his mom tried to coax him into getting up from underneath his beanbag chair and sitting at his desk, he decided to go for a run instead. Running helped him calm down. When he came back, he was ready to have a snack and start on his homework.

Struggling Far More than Others

Is your child struggling in school year-after-year despite getting extra help? If so, there is probably a more fundamental obstacle that your child needs help in overcoming.

Experts are figuring out better ways to help these kids by addressing their underlying brain neurology. One of the thought leaders in this area is Barbara Arrowsmith Young who founded the [Arrowsmith Program](#). This program is based on neuroscience research and 40 years experience demonstrating that it is possible for students to strengthen the weak cognitive capacities underlying their learning dysfunctions through a program of specific cognitive exercises.

When your kids experience success in their homework, their internal motivation improves. Once they have the skills they need to get their homework done independently, your parenting job becomes much easier!

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