



Homework Summary

Why Homework?

Teens and emerging young adults will have to manage a larger and more complex workload and new study skills along with longer-term projects. This will take a whole new level of planning and organization. Layered in with the day-to-day school assignments, there may also be future academic goals they want to reach (like going to college), which will require planning and incremental action steps. Schoolwork and school goals can become your daily challenges if you don't create regular routines with input from your teen in advance, clarify roles and responsibilities, and establish a plan for success.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your teen are not tired or in a rush.

Tip Intentional communication and a healthy parenting relationship support these steps.

Step 1. Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Declare learning independence! Begin by letting your teen or emerging young adult know that they are in charge of their own learning and you are there to be a support whenever they request it.
- Allowing choice will add to your teen's sense of control and motivation to do the work during the allotted time. Ask questions like:
 - *"Considering all of the activities that typically take place after school, when is the best time for you to do homework?"*
 - *"How can I be helpful in supporting you getting your homework done?"*
- Experiment to figure out a plan. Ask key questions and assign a first trial week. *"Does this time work better?"* We all have different energy cycles and times when we feel better able to focus, so work on discovering that rhythm with your teen, and you'll go a long way toward setting them up for success!
- Keep homework time sacred and consistent. If you are consistent, it serves as a predictable, non-negotiable process. Your teen knows what to expect and when to expect it.
- Take note of the time when your teen says is best to do homework. Agree upon a timer that can go off at that time each day.
- If your teen has decided to do homework right after school, be certain they know to have a healthy, high protein snack first (peanut butter crackers, cheese, fruit, etc.).

- Your teen may feel like it's necessary to stay up all night studying for a test particularly if they have procrastinated studying. Know and share the facts! Your teen is more likely to get a higher score with a good night's rest than with a full night of studying and less sleep.
- Set up space. Take some time to determine a consistent space for homework completion.
- Create a family homework rule.
- Make it fun! Designing a homework spot together can be an enjoyable experience.
- At the beginning of the school year, before you have to turn around a bad habit, talk about screen time as it relates to getting homework accomplished. Ask, *"What do you think our rules should be around cell phone use or friend communication during homework time? When is it appropriate and helpful? When is it distracting?"*

Step 2. **Teach** New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- When your teen calls you over to ask about a problem, ask:
 - *"Where did you find this lesson in your book?"*
 - *"What other places could you find the answer?"*
 - *"What are other ways to think about your answer?"*
 - Share your curiosity and interest in the subject but do not provide an answer.
- Plan and schedule. Pick out a calendar together (a physical calendar or planner is preferable to a digital one since the physical act of writing seals the schedule more firmly into the creator's brain). This kind of planning and organizing can go a long way toward helping your teen achieve their school and life goals today, while establishing valuable practices and habits for their future.
- Lead your teen to resources.
 - Focus on keywords so that they too can learn to spot key words.
 - Attempt to read and review together.
 - Ask your teen which points are most important when you are talking about a problem.
 - Have your teen underline or highlight those words in the instructions or in the specific question they are trying to answer so that you have a focusing point.
- Research together. Be certain that you allow your teen to drive the process. You might ask, *"What should we look up or search for together?"*
- Teach the essential "brain break."
- You do not need to be subject matter experts EVER! Consider how you can provide the guidance and support for them to answer the question or solve the problem themselves (even if they get it wrong).

Tip One of the best investments you can make for this age group is a planner. Visit an office supply store together and help them pick out a favorite one along with highlighters, pens, file folders, index cards and any other organizational supplies you think might be useful. When you get back home, work on plotting out deadlines together for papers, projects, and studying as a model example for the coming year. Show your teen how adults operate in the work world.

Trap Though you may make comments you feel are empathizing with your teen's predicament, be careful! Criticizing the work assigned, the teacher who assigned it, or the school's policies will become demotivating for your teen. After all, why should they work hard if you don't agree with what's been assigned?

Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use "I'd love to see..." statements. *"I'd love to see how you problem solve this in a different way."*
- Do a "brain break" dry run.
- Recognize effort using "I notice..." statements. *"I noticed how you got to work this afternoon when the timer sounded without me asking. That's taking leadership!"*
- Proactively remind in a gentle, non-public way. *"Remember what we can do next to figure out the problem? What is it?"*

Trap Resist the temptation to nag. Teens may require more time to work on an assignment than we feel is necessary. But they need the time they need. Be sure to wait long enough for them to show you they are competent. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to do what you need them to do.

Step 4. **Support** Your Teen's Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude.
- Ask key questions when your teen struggles. *"It looks like you feel stuck. Is there another way you could approach the problem? How are you feeling about homework tonight?"*
- Coach on communications. *"Seems like you are having trouble figuring this problem out and cannot find the answer in your resources. This would be a good time to ask your teacher about this problem. You might say, 'Mrs. Johnson, I struggled with this one. Can you help me?'"*
- Stay engaged. It can be motivating for a teen when a parent does their own paperwork alongside them keeping them company.
- Allow for and reflect on real world consequences. If you see a mistake on your teen's paper, don't correct it.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

Trap If we groan that it's homework time, surely our teen will groan as well. Become aware of your own reactions to homework. Be sure that the tone and attitude you bring to homework is one of digging in, being curious, and learning.

Tip A research study noted whether mothers' comments during homework completion were controlling or supporting autonomy and competence.¹ The researchers concluded that those children who brought worries about their ability to perform had a heightened sensitivity to their mothers' comments. Moms who supported their autonomy – *"I know you can do it!"* – and demonstrated that they believed in their child's ability to do the work predicted increased achievement over time. However, those mothers who were more controlling in their comments – *"I need to check your work. That's not right."* – predicted less engagement and lower achievement in their children.

Step 5. **Recognize** Effort and Quality to Foster Motivation

- Recognize and call out when it is going well. *"I notice you completed your homework today. Yes! Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Find small ways your teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, *"We'll get our business taken care of first with our homework, and then we'll take a bike ride."* Include high fives, fist bumps, and hugs as ways to appreciate one another.

References

1. Fei-Yin Ng, F., Kenney-Benson, G.A., & Pomerantz, E.M. (2004). Children's achievement moderates the effects of mothers' use of control and autonomy support. *Child Development*. Vol. 75, 3, 764-780.

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