



Homework Summary

Why Homework?

Five and six-year-olds will be brand new to the homework experience, and you will have an opportunity to establish positive habits that will stay with them for years to come. Seven, eight, nine, and ten-year-olds will be bringing brand new academic challenges home like reading with competence and learning fractions. Additionally, they may be expected to complete long-term projects. This will take a whole new level of planning and organization. These homework assignments can become a challenge if regular routines are not established.

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

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

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

- Allowing your child some choices in establishing a homework routine will add to your child's sense of control and motivation. Questions you could ask include:
 - *"How do you want to spend your time after school?"*
 - *"Would you like a snack first?"*
 - *"Do you want to change into play clothes first?"*
 - *"Do you want time to rest or run outside and play?"*
 - *"Considering all of the activities that typically take place after school, when is the best time for you to do homework?"*
- Experiment to figure out a plan for homework.
- Once you agree upon a time that makes sense for all, your attempts to keep that time sacred and consistent for homework will be important to ensure it becomes a habit and routine.
- Take note of the time when your child has said is the best time to do homework. Set a timer to go off at that time.
- If your child has decided to do homework right after school, be certain to provide a healthy high protein snack first.
- If you cannot offer a choice in the time of day homework is completed, then find another choice your child can make.
- Set up a consistent space for homework completion.
- Work with your child to get the homework space ready.
- The goal of a homework space is to provide a well-equipped, consistent place for your child to fully focus on the work at hand.
- Make it fun!
- Create a family homework rule.

Step 2. Teach New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- When your child calls you over to ask about a problem, ask prompting questions such as:
 - *“Where in your book did you find this lesson?”*
 - *“Where else could you look to find the answer?”*
 - *“What other ways can you think about your answer?”*
- Share your curiosity and interest in the subject, but do not provide an answer.
- Lead your child to resources.
- Research together. You might ask, *“What should we look up or search for together?”*
- Teach the essential “brain break.”
- It’s a common challenge of homework time for a child to fear making mistakes. Homework is practice, it is intended as a time to try out an answer, get it wrong, and try again.
- You do not need to be a subject matter expert EVER! Ask yourself how you can provide the guidance and support for them to answer the question or solve the problem (even if they get it wrong).

Step 3. Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements like, *“Show me you know what’s next when our timer goes off.”*
- Do a “brain break” dry run.
- Recognize effort by using “I notice...” statements like, *“I noticed how you got to work this afternoon when the timer sounded without me asking. That’s taking responsibility!”*
- Proactively remind your child to help them be successful. You may whisper in your child’s ear, *“Remember what we can do next to figure out the problem? What is it?”*

Trap Resist the temptation to nag. Children often need more time to perform tasks that challenge them even if you believe they are simple and don’t require much time. Be sure to wait long enough for your child 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 Child’s Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude.
- Ask key questions when your child struggles. You could say, *“It looks like you feel stuck. Is there another way you could approach the problem?”* or *“How are you feeling about homework tonight?”*
- Coach on communications. You might then say, *“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 child 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 child’s worksheet, don’t correct it. You could leave it alone altogether or ask once, *“Do you feel like this is right or are you struggling with it?”* If your child confirms it’s the answer they want to give, then allow them the experience of their teacher correcting it.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.

Trap If you groan that it's homework time, surely your child will groan too. 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

- Notice even small successes: *“I noticed you completed your homework today on your own in the time we agreed upon. Yes! Excellent.”*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, *“We'll get our business taken care of first with our homework, and then, we'll run around outside or take a bike ride.”* Include hugs as a way 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.

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2020). *Homework Summary. Ages 5-10*. Retrieved from <https://www.ParentingMontana.org>.



Brought to you by the Offices of Child Care, SAMHSA, and DPHHS. The views and opinions contained in the publication do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and should not be construed as such.