

Homework Age 14 Summary

Why Homework?

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you play an essential role in your child's/teen's success. There are intentional ways to grow a healthy parent-child relationship, and setting up a daily homework routine provides a perfect opportunity.

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Get Your Child/Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Allowing your child/teen some choices in establishing a homework routine will add to your child's/teen's sense of control and motivation. Questions you could ask to understand their preferences better include:
 - *"When is the best time for you to do homework?"*
 - *"What things (like having a snack and taking breaks) help you finish your homework?"*
- Prepare for difficulties. Ask, *"I know you've missed completing assignments in the past. What helps you stay on top of homework, and what gets in your way?"*
- Experiment to figure out your plan. Since your child/teen has changed since their younger years along with the demands of their homework, it's an ideal time to revisit the question of when your child/teen feels they'll be at their best to tackle homework in the hours after school.
- Once you agree upon a time that makes sense for all, your attempts to keep homework sacred and consistent will ensure it becomes a habit and routine. If you are consistent, it can serve as a predictable, non-negotiable process. Your child/teen knows what to expect and when to expect it.
 - Take note of when your child/teen has said it is their best time to do homework. Set a timer to go off at that time. Instead of you calling, "Time for homework!" which may incite a battle, an inanimate object is alerting them. You can use a kitchen timer outside or inside or collaboratively set an alarm on your cell phone or iPad.
 - If your child/teen has decided to do homework right after school, 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/teen can make.
 - Set up a space. Take some time to determine a consistent space for homework completion.
- A homework space aims to provide a well-equipped, consistent place for your child/teen to focus entirely on the work. In this way, they'll know what they can expect. You won't

have frustrations like not being able to find a school tool. And they'll learn to take greater responsibility for their learning as they work with you to organize this space.

- When offering choices in designing a homework space that works best for your child/teen, they may prefer to set up their workspace in their bedroom because of their developmental desire for greater independence and privacy.
- If your child/teen is prone to feeling overwhelmed by homework, you can scaffold your child/teen by breaking the work into chunks. Set a timer for fifteen minutes of work and then take a five-minute brain break. Fifteen-minute chunks will help the task feel more doable.
- Support your child's/teen's persistence skills with praise. *"I know it was hard to come inside from playing. I am impressed by how you are tackling things now."*

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Teach New Skills

- When your child/teen calls you over to ask about a problem, ask prompting questions such as:
 - *"What is your guess about the answer?"*
 - *"Is there another place you could find the answer?"*
 - *"Is there another way to think about your answer?"*
 - Share your curiosity and interest in the subject, but do not provide an answer.
- Lead your child/teen to resources. Though you may feel like you've redirected your child/teen multiple times to the resources in front of them, treating each experience as a fresh opportunity to search for answers can help both of you keep an open mind about the work at hand. Frequently, homework will relate to the resources they already have from school -- whether it's a novel or a textbook. So, when they just can't find an answer and ask for your help, guide them back to their text. Take a look together. Here are a few essential tips:
 - Focus on keywords so that they, too, can learn to spot keywords.
 - Attempt to read and review together. Because the text is denser and more complex, children/teens may feel overwhelmed with information and need help focusing on the most important points.
 - Ask your child/teen which points are most important when discussing a problem.
 - Have them underline or highlight those words in the instructions or in the specific question they are trying to answer so that you have a focus point.
- Research together. If you cannot find the source of the problem in your child's/teen's books, do some online research together. But be sure you allow your child/teen to drive the process.
- It's a common challenge of homework time - particularly for middle school-age students - to want to avoid failure and to fear making mistakes. In reality, because homework is practice, it is intended as a time to try out an answer, get it wrong, and try again. Hang a sign near your homework spot to remind your child/teen, "Mistakes are part of learning."
- You do not need to be a subject matter expert. If you cannot get the correct answer, take a step back. Realize that you are stealing a learning opportunity from your child/teen. Ask yourself how you can provide guidance and support for them to answer the question or solve the problem themselves (even if they get it wrong).

Trap: Though you may make comments you empathize with your child's/teen's predicament, be careful! Criticizing the work assigned, the teacher who assigned it, or the school's policies will become demotivating for your child/teen. After all, why should they work hard if you disagree with what's been assigned?

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Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “I’d love to challenge you...” statements. When a child/teen learns a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, *“I’d love to pose a challenge to see if you can focus on math homework for the next seven minutes. Let’s set a timer.”* This can be used when you are in the after-school routine and need that alert to move on to homework.
- Letting your child/teen be the teacher can be empowering. You can say, *“I don’t know much about _____. Can you share with me what you have learned?”*
- Recognize effort. Frequently, children/teens get feedback on what they are not doing right, but how often do you recognize when they are working on getting better? Recognize effort by saying “I notice...” statements like, *“I notice how you got to work this afternoon when the timer sounded without me asking - that’s taking responsibility!”*
- Proactively remind. The challenges in a homework routine often recur daily and are predictable. You might know exactly what they are and when they will happen. So just before they do, remind them gently, non-publicly. You may whisper in your child's/teen's ear, *“Remember what we can do next to figure out the problem? What is it?”*

Tip: The standard homework guideline is ten minutes of nightly homework per grade level. For example, a fifth grader would receive fifty minutes of homework per night. If you find homework taking your child/teen longer than expected or your homework sessions escalate into an emotional battle, schedule time to talk to your child's/teen's teacher. Most teachers see parents as an essential partner in the child's/teen's education and may be able to offer strategies to assist with homework.

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Support Your Child's/Teen's Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Show confidence that your child/teen can learn anything with time and practice (because they genuinely can!). Your comments and reflections will significantly affect their competence in meeting any learning challenge.
- Ask critical questions when your child/teen has challenges. You could say, *“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. You might notice your child/teen having a hard time and getting stuck even with your support.

- Stay engaged. It can be motivating for a child/teen when a parent does their own paperwork alongside them, keeping them company. Working together, after all, is much more enjoyable than working alone.

Trap: If you groan that it's homework time, they will also groan. Become aware of your reactions to homework. Be sure that the tone and attitude you bring to homework is one of digging in, being curious, and learning.

Trap: Ensure your child/teen knows your love and approval are not conditional on their grades or academic performance.



Recognize Efforts

- Recognize and call out when things are going well. It may seem obvious, but it's easy not to notice when everything moves smoothly. Noticing and naming the behavior provides the necessary reinforcement that you see and value your child's/teen's choice. For example, when children/teens complete their homework on time, a short, specific call out is all that's needed: *"I notice you completed your homework today on your own in the time we agreed upon. Excellent."*
- Recognize small steps along the way. Don't wait for significant accomplishments—like the whole bedtime routine going smoothly—to recognize effort. Remember that your recognition can work as a tool to promote more positive behaviors. Find small ways your child/teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.

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