

# Homework Age 18 Summary

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## Why Homework?

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

STEP

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### Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- Experiment to figure out a plan. Your teen has changed since their younger years along with the demands of their homework, so it's an ideal time to revisit the question of when your 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 that time sacred and consistent for homework are essential to ensure it becomes a habit and routine. If you are consistent, it can serve as a predictable, non-negotiable process. Your teen will know what to expect and when to expect it.
- Take note of when your teen says it 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 sure they know to have a healthy, high-protein snack first.
- Set up space. Take some time to help them determine a consistent space for homework completion. You may look for
  - a well-lit location
  - proximity to your family's living space or kitchen (wherever you'll typically be so that you are never far to offer support)
  - a durable work surface that can get dirty
- If your teen is prone to feeling overwhelmed by homework, you can scaffold your teen by breaking the work into chunks. Suggest that your teen 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.
- Make it fun! Designing a homework spot together can be an enjoyable experience. Allow your teen to pick out their own organization bins and school tools.
- When offering choices in designing a homework space that works best for your teen, they may prefer to set up a workspace in their bedroom because of their developmental desire for greater independence and privacy. If they do this, stop in a few times - not to check up on them - but to offer your support.
- At the beginning of the school year, before you have to turn around a bad habit, talk about screen time related to completing homework. Again, seek input.

**STEP  
2****Teach New Skills**

- Ask questions. When your teen calls you over to ask about a problem, ask prompting questions such as:
  - *“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. You can anticipate that multiple school and life goals, short- and long-term schoolwork, and projects are enough to challenge an experienced project manager. Even though your teen longs for independence, they can use your support to manage their goals and plot their action steps to meet them.
  - Write out a list of school and life goals. This may need to be revisited quarterly as classes and priorities change.
  - Place deadlines in the schedule, guesstimate the time needed to work toward goals, and place milestones or benchmarks in the calendar to help your young adult see how much needs to be accomplished each day or week.
- Lead your teen to resources. Though you may feel like you’ve redirected your 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. Frequently, homework will relate to the resources they already have from school, whether novels or textbooks. So, when they just can’t find an answer and ask for your help, guide them back to their text. Take a look together.
  - Focus on keywords so that they can learn to spot keywords.
  - Attempt to read and review together. Because text is denser and more complex, teens may feel overwhelmed with information and need help to focus on the most important points.
  - 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.
  - Note that symbolism and abstract meanings may be more challenging for this age group. Abstract thinking is being developed, but it’s new and requires some exercise. Have patience, and know it’s normal and related to a development milestone.
- Research together. If you cannot find the source of the problem in your teen’s books, do some online research together. But be sure that you allow your teen to drive the process. You might ask, *“What should we look up or search for together?”* These are the first seeds of solid research skills.
- Letting your 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?”*
- Teach the essential “brain break.” Breaks do not represent weakness or a lack of persistence. Human brains work better if they are given frequent breaks.

**Tip:** A planner is one of the best investments for this age group. Visit an office supply store together and help them pick out a favorite one, highlighters, pens, file folders, index cards, and any other organizational supplies you think might be helpful. When you get back home, work on plotting out deadlines together for paper 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 empathize 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 disagree with what's been assigned?

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### Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use "I'd love to see..." statements. When teens learn a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say, *"I'd love to see how you problem-solve this differently."* This can be used when your teen is stuck or missing essential steps.
- Recognize effort. Recognize effort by saying "I notice..." statements like, *"I notice how you got to work this afternoon without me asking. That's taking leadership!"*
- Proactively remind. Often, the challenges in a homework routine recur day after day and may be predictable. You might know precisely what they are and when they will happen. So, just before they do, remind them gently, non-publicly. You may whisper in your teen's ear, *"Remember what we can do next to figure out the problem? What is it?"*

**Tip:** Ensure your teen knows your love and approval are not conditional on their grades or academic performance.

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

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### Support Your Teen's Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude. Show every confidence that your 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 key questions when your teen has difficulty. 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 teen having a hard time and getting stuck even with your support. You might then say, *“It 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 am having a hard time with this one. Can you help me?’”*
- Stay engaged. It can motivate a teen when a parent does their 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, your teen will groan, too. 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.

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**RECOGNIZE**

## 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 teen’s choice. For example, when 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 teen is making an effort and let them know you see them.

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