

## Homework Age 6 Summary

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### Why Homework?

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

**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 to understand your child's preferences better 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?"*
- Experiment to figure out a homework plan. Since the homework experience for younger children is new, you'll want to take a week and try different times to see what works best with your child's energy.
- Once you agree upon a time that works for everyone, your attempts to keep homework consistent will ensure it becomes a habit and routine. If you are consistent, it can serve as a predictable, non-negotiable process. Your child knows what to expect and when to expect it.
- Remember what your child says is the best time to do homework. Set a timer to go off at that time. Instead of you calling out, *"Time for homework!"* which may incite a battle, an inanimate object alerts them.
- If your child has decided to do homework right after school, provide a healthy, high-protein snack first (peanut butter crackers, cheese sticks, and apples). Consider having this snack ready for the car ride home.
- If you cannot offer a choice in the time of day homework is completed, then find another choice your child can make. For example, allow your child to decide what space they use or what snack they will have to accompany homework completion. Adding some level of choice to the process will prevent arguments and help your child take ownership.
- Set up a space. Take some time to determine a consistent space for homework completion. 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 solid work surface that can get dirty
- a water bottle
- Work with your child to get the homework space ready. You'll want to set up the space with:
  - school supplies (loose-leaf paper, crayons, glue sticks, scissors, pencils, a pencil sharpener, a children's dictionary, and any other items you anticipate they might need)
  - no clutter (A disorganized environment can distract from a child's focus. So eliminate clutter, organize tools, and only have the essentials. Invest in a few supply holders to keep tools neat and ready.)
  - a binder, bin, or other receptacle designated for school papers that are brought home and stay at home

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Teach New Skills

- 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. Homework frequently looks like a worksheet that follows a chapter. That chapter had all the new concepts laid out and is being exercised on that worksheet. Because young children have not yet figured out basic learning habits, they likely won't know to go back into the book to search for the answers so often spelled out for them. Guide them right back to their text. Take a look together. Here are a few key tips:
  - Focus on keywords so that they, too, can learn to spot keywords.
  - Attempt to read together. Young children learning to read may require help reading and understanding directions.
  - Use your finger to underscore the text you are reading.
  - Ask your child which words are most important when discussing a problem.
  - Have your child 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. If you cannot find the source of the problem in your child's books, do some online research together. But be sure that you allow your child 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 child be the teacher can be empowering. You can say, *“I don't know much about \_\_\_\_\_ can you teach me?”*
- Teach the essential “brain break.” Breaks do not represent weakness or a lack of persistence. People's brains work better if they take frequent breaks.
- It's a common challenge for a child to fear making mistakes during homework time. Homework is practice; it is intended as a time to try out an answer, get it wrong, and try

again. Hang up a sign near your homework spot to remind your child, “Mistakes are part of learning.”

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**PRACTICE**

## Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “Show me...” statements with a positive tone and body language to express excitement and curiosity. When a child learns a new ability, they are eager to show it off! Give them that chance. Say: *“Show me you know what’s next when our timer goes off.”* This can be used when you are in the after-school routine and need an alert to move on to homework.
- Recognize effort by using “I notice...” statements. For example, *“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. Often, the challenges in a homework routine recur daily and are 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 child’s ear, *“Remember what we can do next to solve the problem? What is it?”*

**Trap:** Resist the temptation to repeat yourself. Children often need more time to perform challenging tasks, 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 can do what you need them to do.

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**SUPPORT**

## Support Your Child’s Development and Success

- Promote a learning attitude and a growth mindset. Show confidence that your child can learn anything with time and practice (because they truly can!). Your comments and reflections will significantly affect their competence in meeting any learning challenge.
- Ask key questions when your child is having a hard time. 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 notice your child is having difficulty 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 had a hard time with this one. Can you help me?’”*
- Stay engaged. It can motivate a child when a parent does their paperwork alongside them, keeping them company. Working together, after all, is much more enjoyable than working alone.

- Allow for and reflect on real-world consequences. If you see a mistake on your child's worksheet, don't correct it. You'll be taking away a valuable learning opportunity. You could leave it alone or ask once, *"Do you feel like this is right, or are you having difficulty with it?"* If your child confirms it's the answer they want to give, then allow them the experience of their teacher correcting it. It's a significant learning opportunity. It may open the door to extra support from their teacher.

**Tip:** The standard homework guideline is 10 minutes of nightly homework per grade level. For example, a second grader would receive 20 minutes of homework per night. If you find homework taking your child longer than expected or your homework sessions are escalating into an emotional battle, schedule time to talk to your child's teacher. Most teachers see parents as an essential partner in the child's education and may be able to offer strategies to assist with homework.

**Trap:** Ensure your child 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 choice. For example, when children 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 is making an effort and let them know you see them.

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