

“Notes From School”

General Homework Tips For Parents

With every “Back to School” season comes the age-old question that parents inevitably ask their student prior to free time, “Do you have any homework”? In this day and age, homework can take on many different forms. But mainly, it falls into four categories: 1) Practice, 2) Preparation, 3) Extension, and 4) Integration. Practice homework assists students to reinforce the past day’s lessons and bring them to mastery of a particular topic, concept, or idea. Most people are familiar with this traditional model. Preparation homework allows students to do some initial investigation in order to be ready to participate in upcoming lessons. A student may be asked to read a few chapters for tomorrow’s discussion or they may be asked to bring certain supplies to their science classroom for a lab experiment. Extension homework requests that students apply existing knowledge to new concepts. Lastly, Integration homework asks that students apply many different existing skills into one particular task. Solving a linear equation would be an example of this task using addition, subtraction, elimination, or substitution.

In order to make homework time successful, the US Department of Education has released the following tips for you and your students to utilize:

- Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework. Avoid having your child do homework with the television on or in places with other distractions, such as people coming and going.
- Make sure the materials your child needs, such as paper, pencils and a dictionary, are available. Ask your child if special materials will be needed for some projects and get them in advance.
- Help your child with time management. Establish a set time each day for doing homework. Don’t let your child leave homework until just before bedtime. Think about using a weekend morning or afternoon for working on big projects, especially if the project involves getting together with classmates.
- Be positive about homework. Tell your child how important school is. The attitude you express about homework will be the attitude your child acquires.
- When your child does homework, you do homework. Show your child that the skills they are learning are related to things you do as an adult. If your child is reading, you read too. If your child is doing math, balance your checkbook.
- When your child asks for help, provide guidance, not answers. Giving answers means your child will not learn the material. Too much help teaches your child that when the going gets rough, someone will do the work for him or her.

- When the teacher asks that you play a role in homework, do it. Cooperate with the teacher. It shows your child that the school and home are a team. Follow the directions given by the teacher.
- If homework is meant to be done by your child alone, stay away. Too much parent involvement can prevent homework from having some positive effects. Homework is a great way for kids to develop independent, lifelong learning skills.
- Stay informed. Talk with your child's teacher. Make sure you know the purpose of homework and what your child's class rules are.
- Help your child figure out what is hard homework and what is easy homework. Have your child do the hard work first. This will mean he will be most alert when facing the biggest challenges. Easy material will seem to go fast when fatigue begins to set in.

Even with all these helpful tips, challenges may arise. Please do not wait or hesitate to make contact with your student's teacher via a face-to-face meeting, notes in the homework folder, e-mail, or a phone call.