

TEN HOMEWORK TIPS FOR PARENTS

At the end of a busy school day, motivating any child to sit quietly and complete homework can be challenging. This scenario is often even more difficult for children with disabilities, who may struggle with a higher level of fatigue, difficulty with organization, slower than average assignment completion, and/ or attentional issues. The following ten tips may be helpful in supporting your child's success with homework:

- 1) Create a supportive environment for your child's homework time that includes adequate lighting as well as a comfortable chair and desk. Choose a quiet space that minimizes distractions from other family members and activities in your household.
- 2) Develop a list of homework supplies and purchase these supplies early in the year in preparation for homework time.
- 3) Establish a routine of completing homework at the same time every day. Agree upon rules for avoiding interruptions such as phone calls during homework time.
- 4) Color coding subject/task areas by using color folders and corresponding highlighters may assist your child in organizing and keeping track of his/her materials.
- 5) Purchase a calendar with room to record short and long-term assignments and due dates that your child can review at a glance.
- 6) Create a nightly "to do list" that breaks down assignments and allows your child to check off as he/she accomplishes each task. Parents can simplify this process by jotting down a few items quickly on a post it note for the child to cross off. Help your child decide the order of task completion, assessing whether he/she works better by starting with an easier or more difficult assignment.
- 7) For some children, a timer can be helpful to allocate work time and break time during the homework routine. Reinforce older children's understanding of time management by asking them to estimate how long each assignment will take, then recording the actual length of time needed. Younger children may enjoy using a timer as a motivator (i.e., seeing how many math problems they can complete in ten minutes.)
- 8) Assist your child in breaking assignments into shorter tasks. This strategy is frequently used by special education teachers, who are happy to collaborate with parents in this process. If your child says "I have no homework tonight," probe further about longer-term assignments that can be completed over time despite not being "due tomorrow."
- 9) Teach your child a system for organizing his/her backpack at the end of each school day and follow the same process at home once the work is completed. An assignment notebook should travel with your child between home and school each day. If your child tends to have difficulty recording assignments or misplaces completed homework, you may want to establish a system in collaboration with your child's teacher(s) and/or special education liaison. Gather and organize completed assignments immediately after homework completion rather than leaving this task until the next morning.
- 10) Provide frequent praise in response to the progress your child makes in completing his/her assignments. The incentive of a preferred activity can also be very effective in motivating a child to complete homework. It may also be helpful to ensure that something the child enjoys (TV, computer time, calling a friend, playing a game with a parent) is scheduled immediately following the nightly homework session.

Every child responds differently to strategies and it is recommended that parents try a variety of these tips to determine which combination works best for the child. If, despite these efforts, your child is still struggling in understanding assignment directions or he/she spends an excessive amount of time completing assignments, it is essential for parents to share these concerns with the child's teacher in order to assess whether these issues are typical given the student's age or grade level and the demands of a particular assignment or whether additional interventions or modifications are needed.