Anderson Center Consulting Services

Helping with Homework:
A Parent & Caregiver Workshop
Offering:

Tips & Strategies for Families who Struggle with Homework, with a
Focus on Students with ADHD, Autism & Executive Functioning Needs

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What is Homework?

“School work that a student is required to do at home”

Sounds simple, right?
Why is HW challenging for students with ADHD, Autism, or Executive Functioning difficulties?

Homework involves:
- Planning
- Organization
- Self-monitoring & self-management
- Self-regulation
- Compliance with non-preferred/difficult/boring work demands
- Transitions
- Sustained attention & effort
And Homework Occurs in...
An environment that naturally is filled with an abundance of competing variables!

We can end up with challenges involving...
- Being Prepared
- Timing
- Location
- Getting Started
- Power Struggles
- HW Completion
Determine the right location

- Where in your home is the best fit for your child’s needs?
- How much distraction can the child handle?
- How much space do they need?
- Does it need to be quiet or is background noise better?

Have this conversation with your child, observe how they work best, and identify a consistent place they can work.

Having a predictable/stable location helps children to understand what occurs where in your home.

Find the best time

- Does your child need down time before starting HW?
  - If so, decide how long this lasts and what it entails
- Is it best to get it done right away?

- Either way, establish a predictable routine for when HW will happen
- If you cannot stick to exact times, build your routine around activities
Make needed materials readily available

- Be prepared....make sure the materials they will likely need are in their HW space or they know where and how to access them
  - Use portable storage if needed

- Help them to be prepared:
  - What do they need to make sure they bring home from school?
  - Do they know how to find out about assignments if they forgot?
    - Contact a friend
    - Teacher website
    - Google classroom
  - Checklists can be a helpful reminder tool if your child forgets necessary elements of HW at school
    - List in a planner
    - Post it on a notebook
    - Index card inside their backpack
    - Reminder app on phone

End of the Day Checklist

Did I remember to:

- Fill out all parts of my agenda? math, language arts, science, and social studies.
- Pack all of the materials I need for tomorrow's homework? flash cards, study sheet, book, worksheets, study guide.
- Hand in any work or notes I have for my teacher?
- Gather all of the items I brought to school today? Water bottle, backpack, lunch box, jacket, gloves, hat.
- Check my desk for loose papers?

End of the Day Checklist

I checked my homework log.

My homework is written down for each class.

I have the books I need for homework.

I have the books I need for homework.

I have my 101% book if I need it.
Establish a homework routine

- You have already thought about where and when HW will occur
- Next, you will need to establish a routine for transitioning
  - Does your child need advanced warning?
  - Consider using a timer or natural endings to activities (when you are done with ____ , it’s time to start your HW; for younger kids can use songs).
  - Make sure you have their attention before transitioning (are you interrupting something highly entertaining?).
  - Consider reinforcement for successful transitions (upon arrival to HW location).
Homework routine

- Help your child create (learn how to create themselves) a plan for HW completion
  - What to start with and order of completion
  - Consider time limits for highly distractible child
  - Ensure they understand what they need to do
  - Have a plan for accessing assistance if needed
  - Embed self-monitoring so they (you) can ensure all elements are complete
    - “To do” checklist
    - For older students, establish a monitoring system for them to keep track of larger assignments (calendar, checklist)

Embed choices

- Choice can go a long way to preventing behaviors that are a result of wanting to avoid/postpone unwanted activities (such as HW)
  - Order of tasks
  - Writing utensils to use
  - When to start (in 5 mins, or 10 mins)
  - How long to spend on a task

Choice reduces the power struggle and increases compliance
Embed breaks

- Some children may be able to self-regulate and know when they need a break, some may need the adults to direct this
  - Breaks can be based on amount of time, after each element of HW, when child is showing increased signs of inattention
  - It's just a moment away from the work; get up & walk around, get a drink, etc.
  - Breaks can help prevent meltdowns over increased frustration
  - Teach your child to begin to identify when a break is needed

Use reinforcement

- Reinforcement is something that increases future likelihood of a behavior
- Some children may not be intrinsically motivated by getting good grades
- May need to provide additional reinforcement for any/all components of getting homework done
  - Transitioning to
  - Being prepared
  - Trying their best
  - Finishing tasks without significant behaviors
"First-Then"

Reinforcement can be what they get to do after HW is all done:
- First homework, then screen time
- May need to remind children of this with visual/written cue
More on reinforcement

- Remember to praise and acknowledge small steps toward what you ultimately would like HW time to look like
- Some children may need a more complex reinforcement plan
  - Consider “tokens” or “points” earned toward a larger reward later on
  - This can allow for the elements of HW that are more challenging to be “worth” more
  - Set clear expectations for what needs to occur prior to reinforcement

Clearly identify the problem

- It may seem like the whole idea of HW may cause stress and difficult behaviors, but stop and think about what specifically is the challenge?
  - Forgetting assignments and materials?
  - Difficulty with the content?
  - Rushing through work?
  - Making errors/not checking work?
  - Getting started?
  - Taking too long to complete?

If you can narrow it down, then you can provide support and reinforcement where it’s most needed
Besides getting HW done, why else are these strategies important?

- Increases predictability
- Reduces problem behavior
- Reduces conflict and negotiating
- Builds organizational skills
- Builds time management skills
- Incorporate self-monitoring and self-regulation
- Builds self-esteem when emphasizing the positive

KEEP CALM AND DO YOUR HOMEWORK
References & Resources

www.childmind.org
www.understood.org
www.nasponline.org