

How Parents Can Support Homework Completion in High School

Research shows that the benefits of homework are more evident at the high school level than at the elementary or middle school level. There is little question that parental involvement in homework has a strong positive effect. While parents may be tempted to throw up their hands when their teens resist homework or lack the skills to do it, school success may depend on parents' willingness to help overcome obstacles to homework completion.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

Parents can help teens succeed with homework by providing clear messages about the importance of homework and specific support strategies. There are three key messages about homework that parents need to give their teens:

Homework is an important part of school. Expect teens to complete homework and hand it in when it is due. Holding teens accountable for homework builds responsibility and time management skills.

Parental support will be provided as needed. Some teens are genuinely overwhelmed by homework, either because they find it too difficult or because they don't know how to work on their own. However, teens are less likely to become discouraged or frustrated when parents offer encouragement and assure them that help is available when they get stuck.

Parents will not do homework for their teens. This message lets teens know that the parent role is to encourage and to help them get unstuck, not to do the work for them.

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Strategies for Supporting Homework

Beyond these messages, there are important ways parents can help teens with homework:

Check in with your teens every day. Studies show that teens who have parental assistance in completing homework spend more time on homework. Parents can help motivate their teens and give them strategies for sustaining attention and combating the negative emotions often associated with homework. While some teens, particularly as they get older, resist help or supervision from parents, minimally parents can ask them about homework and plans for completing it. “What do you have to do and when are you going to do it?” should be a daily mantra for parents as they help their teens plan for homework.

Establish clear homework routines. Tasks are easiest to accomplish when they are tied to specific routines. By establishing daily routines for homework completion, parents will not only make homework go more smoothly, but they will also foster a sense of order that teens can apply to later life, including college and work. The steps to establishing homework routines include:

- Identify a location where homework will be done.
- Make sure teens have all the materials needed to complete homework assignments (e.g., pencils, erasers, paper, dictionary, calculator).
- Decide on the best time to do homework (e.g., right after school, just before or after dinner).
- Make plans for completing homework (i.e., list all the tasks to be accomplished, identify when teens will begin each task, and have your teen estimate how long it will take to complete each task).
- Help teens establish and maintain organizational systems. Help your teens keep workspaces neat and set up systems to keep track of homework assignments.