

Homework: Scholarship or Civil War?

Homework civil wars make school nights miserable for everyone. There's brother at the kitchen table after dinner staring out the window. His favorite sister, who completed her homework years ago, smugly watches TV in the other room. Mom and Dad check in now and then to badger the distinguished scholar.

Bad end to the day. How can you make homework less painful and more efficient?



Two Basic Rules

First, when is your assistance with homework not needed? About one third of kids are **Responsible Self-Starters** who complete their homework on their own without any help from you. Praise their responsibility, but...

Rule # 1: Stay out of their way!

Second, we are going to ask you **not to do** something that is as natural as falling out of bed. What is that horrible thing? It's asking your child—when **you** happen to think about it—if he has homework. That's known as a Spur-of-the-Moment Request and it's **GUARANTEED** to a) maximize irritability and b) minimize cooperation.

Rule # 2: No Spontaneous Requests!

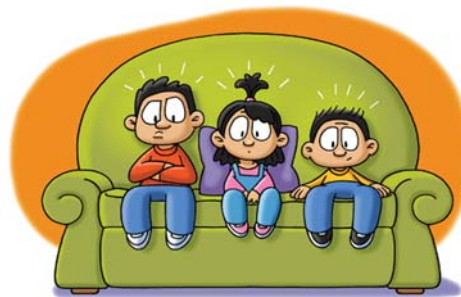
What to do instead?

A Daily Homework Routine

You're going to set up a daily procedure for homework. This procedure will save your life and improve your relationship with your child.

Here is a basic model you can use to get started:

1. Child home from school at 3:10.
2. Snack.
3. Goof off 40 minutes.
4. Start homework at 4 p.m.
5. Finish homework before dinner.
6. Evening free for fun!



Do a "Kickoff Conversation" with the children regarding the new way of doing things. Or negotiate the new routine with them. Don't forget the kitchen timer!



The PNP Technique

Your daughter has just completed her midweek spelling pretest. Ten words on the list, she spelled nine correctly. When she brings you her paper, your first job is to show her the word she spelled wrong. Right?

Wrong! PNP means “Positive-Negative-Positive.” Whenever a youngster brings any schoolwork to you, the first thing out of your mouth must be something positive. For instance, praise the child for remembering to show you her work. After something nice, you may then make a negative comment—if absolutely necessary. Finally, conclude your brilliant remarks with something positive.

Charting for Homework

A daily charting system can really help decrease homework hostilities. Here’s an easy five-point scale (five high, zero low): One point each for neat, correct, thorough, no complaining and finally (the Magic Point!), starting on your own without being reminded. If you can get a child to start the work on his own, the battle is more than half won! For kids with academic handicaps, you may have to use artificial reinforcers (extra rewards).



Zip the Lip!

Your goal is for your children to take control of their schoolwork, not for you to be responsible. Keep this rule in mind: The less you are nagging, the better designed your homework routine is!

Homework Quick Reference Guide **NEW!**

Homework civil wars can make school nights miserable for the whole family. School work battles can go on for two, three, four or more hours a night. Learn how you can make homework time less painful and more productive! [Learn more](#)

