

TOP 25 HOMEWORK TIPS

**What Parents Need to Know,
What Parents Need to Do**

A **FREE** Mini-book for You from
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Thank you for downloading my Top 25 Homework Tips. I hope you find it informative and useful.

These days, homework is one of the biggest problems for parents, teachers and kids. It brings with it anger, frustration, tears, fears and family disharmony.

As one dad commented, “When I was in fourth grade I came home from school and played ball with the kids on the block. Then I ate dinner with my family, did my homework and went to sleep. I have two masters degrees...I did fine. Jack is nine years old. He seems to be doing homework until eleven o’clock every night. I’m not an educator, but something’s wrong here.”

The thing that is wrong, or at least different, is that there is more to learn today than ever before. So, how do we go back to the good old days when first graders weren’t crying over homework, when fifth graders weren’t having meltdowns over homework, and when ninth graders weren’t lying to their parents over homework?

The Top 25 Homework Tips contain answers to these and other questions. It also provides strategies to help make homework easier, more successful, and more pleasant. I hope very much that these tips and strategies improve the homework scene in your home.

Dr. Linda Silbert

What is Quality Homework?

1. **What Is a Reasonable Amount?** Many parents think that a large amount of homework is a sign of a good teacher. That is false. A good teacher helps children learn the material and provides a reasonable amount of homework while at the same time helping children to develop a love of learning. Too much homework doesn't provide children adequate time to process and rehearse, which makes it counterproductive. However, worse than that, it turns them off to school and to learning.
2. **The Goal Is to Learn:** The goal is not how much homework your child gets; the goal is how much your child is learning. To learn, a person needs small chunks of information at a time that relates to something that is already in their memory. Then they need time to process that information and rehearse it by writing it, saying it and hearing it.
3. **Each Assignment Has a Specific Goal:** Your child's teacher may not make this clear, but be sure that your child understands that each assignment has a specific goal. If, for example, the goal is for the students to learn geometry, be sure the teacher is not demanding too much precision in writing. This includes excessive concern over neatness, spelling and grammar. The reason? Some kids have so much trouble with the mechanics of writing that the physical demands are all consuming. Be sure to let your child know the writing part is important, but if it is not the focus of the particular assignment, they can relax. This will allow them to focus on what is important: to learn geometry.
4. **Homework Needs to Be Reviewed for Accuracy.** If you find that your child's teacher(s) never look at her homework because they don't have time to go over it, talk to them about it. If it is only for practice, ask the teacher to give your child, or you, the answers. This way your child will know if she did it correctly, sparing her the effort of studying and learning lessons incorrectly. Also, if your child does her

homework, be sure there is positive reinforcement and constructive criticism. Many children know that the teacher will never go over the homework, so they don't do it. Or, if they do it, they may feel angry and betrayed when it isn't graded – they worked hard, and for what? Be sure every assignment has value and is acknowledged, if not by the teacher, at least by you.

What is Too Much Homework?

5. **How Much is Enough?** Here is a general guide for the typical amount of time children should be expected to spend on homework each school day: grades K-2, 10-20 minutes; grades 3-6, 30-60 minutes; grades 7-12 will vary considerably, depending on subjects, projects due, tests, and so on, but a reasonable average is about two hours, with more on weekends, as needed, for major projects and exams.
6. **Too Many Assignments!** If you are convinced that the amount of homework your child is assigned is consistently excessive, take action. First, talk to other parents to see if this is a common problem. If it is, talk to the teacher, the principal and/or the PTA, and encourage them to develop a more age-appropriate homework policy that will solve the “too-much-homework” issue.
7. **Is It Taking Too Long?** If your child spends an excessive amount of time doing homework, look into the cause. Begin by having a conversation with the teacher. If the problem is class-wide, hopefully the teacher will make adjustments. If the problem is limited to your child because your child works slowly, or has other issues, talk to his teacher and see what can be done to modify his assignments.
8. **Organize Your Child's Schedule:** If homework seems to have taken over your lives, work out a schedule with your child so that he doesn't resort to lying to you in order to be able to play. Kids, even older ones, need time to relax and play. If your child is overworked, it doesn't mean they are learning more.

9. **Catching Up After an Illness:** If your child misses school because of illness, and the teacher(s) send home piles of work to make up, make arrangements with them in order to get it all done over the next few weekends, not in the next few days. Returning to school after an illness requires a large portion of one's available energy just to function. Trying to keep up while also catching up may not be reasonable.
10. **Too Many Tests, Projects, and Homework:** If you find that teachers are assigning too many tests, projects and homework at the same time, contact them. Many kids don't do well on a test or miss a homework assignment because they are too busy doing work for other subjects. Teachers want their students to learn their material, so they would appreciate a call if this is happening. This way teachers can meet among themselves to coordinate the scheduling of time-intensive projects in your child's grade.

Why Do Children Struggle with Homework?

11. **Meeting Children's Needs:** If your child spends the right amount of time on homework, and each night ends up in a meltdown, check to see if your child is getting enough sleep, eating well, and is physically well. Talk to the teacher and your pediatrician. They may identify an issue that needs to be addressed.
12. **Too Difficult:** If homework is continuously too challenging and difficult, then a child will try to avoid it. Contact the teacher and see if it is only your child who is finding it too difficult or if the problem is class-wide.
13. **Too Confusing:** When children chronically complain that directions and assignments are confusing, the cause may be reading comprehension or language-processing problems. Seek the help of the teacher or learning specialist to have your child evaluated.

14. **Too Complicated:** Learning how to plan and carry out long-term projects is a valuable experience. However, if your child's homework is too complicated, it may be overwhelming for him. Some high-school projects would take an executive and her full staff a whole month to complete! If you see that your child's project is "way above his head," then contact the teacher and attempt to adapt the project to your child's ability. This way he will be able to learn from it, and hopefully, enjoy doing it.
15. **Too Boring:** Children will avoid boring busywork because they simply don't want to do it. Unfortunately, children have to learn that sometimes they have to do boring things. If, however, every assignment appears to be dull, talk to the teacher. It might be useful to discuss the purposes of the assignments.
16. **Too Noisy:** Many kids can't concentrate at home because it's too noisy: their siblings are running around, the TV and music systems are blaring, people are talking on telephones, people are fighting, the dog is barking and/or the baby is crying. I don't know about you, but I require a quiet atmosphere to do thoughtful work. As a family, designate a block of time as "quiet time." Kids can use the time to do homework, and parents can catch up on e-mails, read or balance the checkbook.
17. **Too Disorganized:** If your child brings home his book and forgets the assignment, or brings home the assignment and forgets the book – or if he forgets both! – instead of criticizing and punishing him, help him to develop strategies to remember what he needs. Work with him to come up with a plan. If it doesn't work, come up with another plan. For example, obtain a second set of books to keep at home. The teacher may be able to provide this or you can purchase them discounted on line. It also helps if there is a back-up plan to get the assignments – for example, a buddy system or on-line access to the homework assignments.
18. **Too Lonely:** Some children are lonely when required to do homework in their rooms, and don't work efficiently in that setting. Some need

- continuous support and direction – that is, they need someone to help them stay on task or to provide a little assistance when they get stuck. Doing homework on the kitchen table, when there is quiet time, is comforting for some children because they are around people they can call on for support if needed.
19. **Too Restless:** Taking short breaks during long homework sessions is a good idea. After spending a long day at school, it is hard to sit still for long periods. So institute ten-minute breaks during which your child can walk around, shoot some baskets, check her email, do jumping jacks, jog, or dance – whatever works! A ten-minute break will help even the most restless child get through another spurt of homework.
 20. **Too Overbooked:** If your child is being assigned a reasonable amount of homework but is having difficulty completing it, the problem may be that he is overbooked; there simply isn't enough time to do homework. For at least a week, fill out a daily schedule for your child, then see if he can manage it. This way you will be able to see whether the problem is due to overbooking, or if the teacher is actually assigning too much homework for his age and grade.
 21. **Too Unmotivated:** Most kids are not motivated to do homework because they simply don't want to do it; they eventually complete it, but reluctantly. Others appear unmotivated when in fact they avoid homework to protect their egos. Here's their logic. If they don't try and fail, it is due to a lack of motivation. If they do try and end up failing, it could be due to a label they cannot live with: "stupidity." If your child is unmotivated, it might help if you explain the role homework plays in the larger scheme of school and beyond.

What Can Parents Do to Help?

22. **Be Involved:** Be involved in your child's homework, but remember it's not yours. Be there if she needs you, but let her do it herself. If she needs help, help her briefly until she understands it, but then step away from the table. If she wants you to look it over before she hands it in, that's great. If you see a million mistakes, ask if she would

like your help identifying and correcting them, and if the answer is no, leave it up to the teacher to provide instruction. And if your child needs to know how to spell a word, spell it for her – unless the assignment is a spelling test. She doesn't have time to look up every word, and if she already knows how to use a dictionary (in hard copy or on line), why would she spend time looking up words? Her time is too valuable.

23. **Avoid Parent No-Nos:** Some parents are simply overly involved in their children's homework. These parents do things that intentionally tend to drive their children toward lying and deception. Here are a few examples. The perfectionist parent, who demands picture-perfect homework; the helicopter parent, who continuously hovers over her child; and the Pandora's Box parent, a well-meaning parent who, when asked the simplest question, goes into a long-winded treatise.
24. **Effectively Address any Cases of Missing Homework:** If your child misses homework, ask the teacher to contact you instead of automatically punishing your child and taking away recess. If your child misses homework continuously and you cannot figure out why, talk to his teacher, the school counselor or psychologist. For example, many times children avoid doing homework because they have difficulty writing, physically and mentally. If this is the case, you have to address the problem, not punish your child.
25. **Hire a Tutor:** Hire a tutor if homework becomes a real issue in your house. A professional tutor is a great asset when your child needs that little extra help. Or, if you can help your child but the two-year-old is screaming, instead of hiring a tutor, hire a babysitter for the two-year-old and go work with your older child.

About the Author

Linda Silbert, Ph.D., is a world-renowned educator/administrator, school counselor, speaker, award-winning author, and grandma, too. She has devoted her life to working with parents and their children to help make schooling more pleasant and successful.



She and her husband, Alvin J. Silbert, Ed.D, are the founders and directors of STRONG Learning, Inc. The service division offers a full range of tutoring, educational testing, counseling, and test prep in various counties in CA, CT, MA, NY, and VA. The publishing division distributes books, workbooks, and phonics card games produced by the Silberts.

Their STRONG Learning Program, an educational breakthrough, promotes academic learning and emotional support in six key areas - Self-esteem, Trust, Responsibility, Options, Needs, and Goals. This program helps struggling students and academic stars alike achieve the academic success they seek.

Their most recent award-winning book, with the Foreword written by Al Roker (Co-Host of NBC's Today Show), is "Why Bad Grades Happen to Good Kids - What Parents Need to Know, What Parents Need to Do."

Dr. Linda Silbert is a member of the LDA (Learning Disabilities Association of New York State), the IDA (International Dyslexia Association) and the ASCD (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development).