



TERM 03

TOPIC

Parents Newsletter

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HOW TO ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO DO HOMEWORK

Children are more likely to cooperate if we try to do things with them instead of to them. So, talk to your child and explain the reasons why you think homework is important. Allow them to express their potential reservations and negative attitudes, validate how they feel and together work on a solution to make that time easier for everybody. Here are some other suggestions:

- **Find a time in the day when your child is more likely to want to do the homework.** This will depend on their individual preferences but also on when they are least likely to be in a compromised state (hungry, thirsty, tired...). If you have more than one child, don't assume that they'll all be the same.
- Once you establish your child's optimum homework time, **try to be consistent and stick to it in a predictable pattern to create a habit.**
- **The environment for doing homework should be distraction free** but what is considered a distraction can vary from a child to a child. For example, some children prefer to fidget while they think because that helps them focus, while some like to listen to some music for the same reason.
- **Keep it manageable and adjust expectations to match your child's needs, age and developmental stage.** Younger children won't be able to cope with prolonged periods of sitting down and focusing on homework. Some children find it useful if you "chunk" their homework time: break tasks into manageable "chunks" with breaks in between.
- **Create a relaxed, encouraging atmosphere** so that your child doesn't associate homework with stress and frustration but with time spent together, the feelings of being understood and supported.
- **Be playful, open to doing homework in less traditional ways and follow their interests.** Most children are more likely to resist doing homework if it feels like drudgery. Think how you can make it more fun and interesting: practicing spellings with pen and paper might be boring, but going outside and using chalk might be more appealing. Doing Maths worksheets might send some children into meltdowns but taking them for a walk and challenging them to hop in 2s or 5s might be just a bit more palatable.
- **Model behaviour:** some children don't like doing homework because they are worried that they'll make a mistake or that it won't be good enough. If this is the case, make sure that you model how to recover when you make a mistake so that your child can see that mistakes are normal and a wonderful opportunity to learn.

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"A child needs encouragement like a plant needs water"

- Rudolph Dreikurs

Children are more likely to want to do homework if they feel good about it and about themselves. So, **encourage liberally**. In practice this means avoiding blaming, shaming or using any sort of punishment to reprimand a child for not doing homework or not doing it right. It also means avoiding empty praise that will only focus on the outcome. Instead, consider giving feedback that focuses on effort and how far the child has progressed.

If you are blessed with the child that is oppositional and defiant, you might want to consider using **consequences**. This doesn't mean that you must be authoritarian and rigid. It means that you need to **set boundaries in a kind and firm way and follow through**. For example, if your child wants to play on their phone instead of doing homework, you can say "You can play on your phone as soon as you finish your homework. I'll help you." And don't give in when your child protests: validate their feelings, tell them that you love them and that you have faith in them to make the right choice.

If you have tried everything (and then some!) and the thought of homework is still making you cringe, **talk to your child's teacher**. Tell them about your struggles and ask to work together to maybe adjust homework expectations for your child and modify it. And if you feel that you might benefit from talking this through with me too and seeing how this can fit your family's current needs, please contact me on marijana@move-more.org