

Tackling Homework

There are a few issues which cause as much concern and confusion as the matter of homework. Parents tend to worry that children are not getting any or that it is not of the traditionally drill orientated approach.

When is the Best Time to do Homework?

No one best time suits every child, but having a regular daily time seems to help. Decide upon a time that's not too late and fits in with family commitments. You will need to allow an after-school break for a snack and some 'down time'. Sticking to a routine time, varying it only for special occasions, is much better than a random time - there is an expectation that homework is to be done, less resentment about doing it, less procrastination, and less nagging or tantrums because your child has reached fatigue point or it is too late for you to help.

Depending on your child's age and personality, you might offer some choice e.g. the child might have afternoon tea and some play or television, but must begin homework by a certain time.

Does Homework Have to be Done After School?

No. Some children are early risers and prefer to do homework before school, when they are fresh. This is fine if there is someone to supervise or help, or if they are sufficiently independent not to need much assistance. If there is memorising to do e.g. tables, number, then the morning is certainly more appropriate than late evening.

What About Distractions During Homework Time?

Television and homework definitely DO NOT MIX. Try to have the household sufficiently disciplined that there is no television on to tempt anyone during work time. On the other hand, the sounds of chores, telephone calls, or a radio on low should not bother most children too much. Some children may suddenly want to engage you in conversation unrelated to homework. While it is good to have family talk, it can become a reason why homework drags on forever. Show interest in talk but postpone it to a more appropriate time e.g. dinner.

Where Should Children Do Their Homework?

Parents are often advised that primary children need a desk in a quiet place alone to complete homework. However, when children require your supervision, especially when there is more than one child doing homework, the good old kitchen or dining room table serves perfectly well. If the table is close to where you need to be for other domestic chores, you can give assistance as required, keep an eye on what is going on, and get a hundred other things done at the same time. The homework place needs to be well lit, and for best handwriting, children should sit in a comfortable position, preferably on straight backed chairs.

Is There a Particular Order in Which Homework Tasks Should be Done?

Not really. Allowing children to negotiate their own ordering of tasks gives them at least a little control over homework. Children have different patterns; for instance some like to get the written tasks done first so that their handwriting is at its 'freshest'. Some manage homework as they do their dinner - just as they like to eat their least favourite vegetable first, so they begin with their most difficult or unenjoyable homework task, leaving the 'tasty' parts as a kind of reward.

How Much Homework Time is Appropriate at Different Ages?

Homework should not consume the child's after-school life. As a general rule, only informal homework and home reading are recommended for the early years - ranging from 15 minutes in Kindergarten through to a maximum of 20 minutes (Yr 2). In the middle primary section, the time spent may vary from day to day (40-50 minutes) and may be formal or informal, with some getting ready tasks, the occasional creative homework, or some work for a school-based project. The total time should include a good 15-20 minutes of reading aloud or silently, sometimes according to the teacher's requirements of the child's needs. Children in Years 5 and 6 should be taking more responsibility for apportioning their own time between tasks. They should be sustaining reading silently for around 20 minutes each day. From time to time they may have additional research work which might add to the recommended time.

What if Homework is Too Time Consuming?

Teachers usually set homework with limits in mind, but what happens in reality may depend on the child and how interested they are in the work. If your child is given large amounts of homework which take hours to complete, let the class teacher know.

Why Does My Child Concentrate at Some Times and Not at Others?

Children do not maintain concentration for long when they are not engaged in a task. If your child is interested in a particular activity, or can move between two or three different activities in one session, s/he can undoubtedly concentrate for a longer period of time. Once children become restless or distracted they usually need a break.

My Child Has to Use LSCWC for Spelling. What is it?

It stands for LOOK, COVER, SAY, WRITE, CHECK, a popular method teachers use to help children learn words. For each word on the spelling list your child should:-

Look closely at the word and

Say it

Cover the word

Write the word down without any help

Check to see if the word is correct – if it is, your child knows how to spell that word.

What Homework Material Does my Child Need?

Homework time is made easier when all the necessary materials are ready to hand. Many families find it best to assemble a separate labelled cardboard box or plastic basket of material appropriate to the needs of each child. This can aid independence, encourage best work, and minimise battles over materials. In addition, there's a shared family box of those materials that everybody (including parents/carers) needs access to from time to time, especially for project or 'design and make' work. These boxes would include items such as dictionaries (suited to age levels), pencil cases with ruler, B and HB pencils, a good eraser, coloured pencils, textas, atlas, biro - red - blue - glue sticks, scissors, stapler and staples, highlighters, tape and tape dispenser, paper punch, scrap paper, coloured paper and cardboard scraps, junior thesaurus, geometry materials - a combination of these depending upon the age of the child.

Concrete materials such as counters, a pack of coins, multi-attribute blocks (available

Homework

in a family pack and good for children having trouble with maths), laminated place mats of tables or basic number facts, a hundred chart etc are all useful items.

Taken from, *Mt Neighbour Primary School* newsletter.