

Charles Bloom Student Support Services

Tips For Helping Kids and Teens With Homework and Study Habits

Designate specific areas for homework and studying.

- Possibilities include the student's room or the kitchen or dining room table. Eliminate distractions such as TV, stereos if possible.
- Since many young people will study in their own rooms, functionality is very important. Most desks really don't have sufficient space to spread out materials. A table that allows for all necessary supplies such as pencils, pens, paper, books, and other essentials, works extremely well.
- Consider placing a bulletin board in your son or daughter's room. This is an inexpensive and perfect way to post pertinent school items.
- Encourage the use of a planner, small book or pad for writing down assignments so that there is no confusion about when certain assignments must be turned in to the teacher.
- Keep general supplies on hand. Check with your son or daughter about their needs. In fact, make it their responsibility to be well supplied with paper, pencils, note pads, notebook paper, et cetera.

Regularity is a key factor in academic success.

- Try to organize the household so that supper is served at a standard time. Once dinner is done, it's time to crack the books. A minimum of 30 minutes of study/homework time per night should be expected. If the student doesn't have other commitments and gets home reasonably early from school, some homework can be done before supper.

Turn off the TV set.

- Make a house rule, depending on the location of the set, that when it is study time, it is "no TV" time. A television set that is on will draw teens in like bees to honey.

What about music?

- On or off? Contrary to what many specialists say, some kids do seem to function all right with the radio turned on, or listening to an MP3 player. Remember, volume control. Only you should be able to hear it.
- **Certain rules should be set about phone/internet use during study hours.** Phone calls to a school partner to ask a question about homework or to clarify assignments is one thing, but texting and IM'ing during study/homework time is simply not an option.

Teach your child that studying is more than just doing homework assignments.

- One of the most misunderstood aspects of schoolwork is the difference between studying and doing homework assignments. Encourage your son/daughter to do things like:
 - take notes while reading a chapter
 - learn to skim material
 - learn to study tables and charts
 - learn to summarize what is read in their own words
 - learn to make flashcards for quick review of dates, formulas, spelling words, et cetera

Note-taking is a critical skill and should be developed.

- Many students don't know how to take notes in those classes that require them. Some feel they have to write down every word the teacher says. Others have wisely realized the value of an outline form of note-taking. Well prepared teachers present their material in a format that lends itself to outline form or split page note taking.

Should notes ever be rewritten?

- In some cases they should be, especially, if a lot of material was covered, and the student lacks speed and organization. Rewrites take time, but it can be an excellent review of the subject matter. However, rewriting notes isn't worth the time unless the notes are used for review and recall of important information.

A home dictionary is essential, but if it is kept on a shelf to gather dust, it won't do anyone any good. Keep it in an accessible place. Good dictionary, encyclopaedia and organizational skills depend on the ability to alphabetize.

Help your child to feel confident for tests.

- Taking tests can be a traumatic experience for some students. Explain to your child that burning the midnight oil (cramming) the night before a test is not productive. Better to get a good night's sleep. Students also need reminding that when taking a test, they should thoroughly and carefully read the directions before they haphazardly start to mark their test papers. They should be advised to skip over questions for which they don't know the answers. They can always return to those at the end. Often late questions give clues to previous questions on a test. Good advice for any student before taking a test: take a deep breath, relax, and dive in. Always bring an extra pencil just in case.

During a homework session, watch for signs of frustration.

- No learning can take place and little will be accomplished if an assignment is too difficult. As a parent it's okay to offer support. After all you are their number one teacher.

Should parents help with homework?

- Yes-if it is clearly productive to do so, such as calling out spelling words or checking a math problem. No-if it is something the child can clearly handle on their own and learn from the process.
- Read directions, or check over math problems after your child has completed the work. Remember to make positive comments - you don't want your child to associate homework with fights at home.

How best to handle report cards?

- To save shocks and upsets, gently discuss from time to time "how things are going at school" with your child. Something casual, such as "How did the math test go?" "How did you do on the socials report?" "How's your science project coming along? Need any help?" are questions that aren't "third degree" but indicate interest. Know the school policy on homework. Be tuned in to statements such as "He's an awful teacher," "She goes too fast," etc. This may be the child's way of indicating frustration in understanding content or lack of study time with the subject. However, be cautious in contacting teachers without your child's approval or interest. It may disrupt good feelings between you and make you seem to be interfering and spying.