

ParentBrief



Homework: getting it right

If there's one thing that is forever controversial about education, it's homework. Speak to any parent or educator and they're bound to have an opinion about the merits or otherwise of homework. There's no doubt that homework attracts stress, both for kids and parents. There are some kids who take to homework like a duck to water (yes, it has been known!) and then there's the not so silent majority who resent the amount of homework assigned to them and the time in which they have to complete it. When it's not working, homework can be the source of pitched battles, ongoing arguments, much friction, major disappointments, misplaced responsibility and enough tension to sour the best relationships between parents and their kids. But as a shared responsibility between kids, schools and parents, homework doesn't have to be such a hard, heavy load...

Effects of homework

Homework serves two separate purposes: academic development and personal development. Homework is designed to extend classroom learning, including practise (repetition); preparation (groundwork for future classwork); extension (application of skills and ideas to a new task); and creative work assignment (original use of previously learned skills).

Homework also provides experiences for kids to learn attitudes (attitudes and life skills) essential for success and happiness in school and later life. Through homework, kids have opportunities to practise skills in persistence, time management, responsibility and self-motivation. Successful completion of homework encourages kids to view themselves as achievers and independent learners.

The breakdown of responsibility

For kids, homework is the first job they do for someone other than us as parents.

A child's responsibilities include:

- Setting themselves a realistic standard, based on their abilities
- Where possible, completing homework independent of parents and friends
- Submitting homework on time
- Communicating with teachers and parents when problems do arise

For parents, showing interest, enthusiasm and support is essential, as is communicating the importance and value of homework.

A parent's responsibilities include:

- Providing a suitable study area and any electronic devices
- Communicating high, realistic expectations for the quality of homework
- Reinforcing the importance of effort
- Ensuring a child knows ahead of time when homework should commence and how much time should be spent
- Supervision, praise and encouragement for a child to master material, persist, discover and derive pleasure from homework
- Communicating with the school if problems arise

Checking in with teachers

Schools play a big part in sharing the homework load, so as parents, we benefit by familiarising ourselves with the school's homework policy. Check in with your child's teacher/s, using the following points as a guide:

- Is assigned homework to be completed within a reasonable time?
- Are students being told how much time they should spend on homework?
- Is homework reflecting and related to curriculum content?
- Are students clear about the purpose of homework?
- Is homework graded immediately and is feedback being provided?
- Are students being given options for ways to complete homework?
- Is homework designed to maximise success?
- Will a student be able to complete the homework independently?
- Will the school communicate on matters of content, regularity or if problems arise?

Homework for kids is a fact of life. If we as parents take, rather than share responsibility for its completion, we deny our kids opportunities to learn strategies for self-motivation, resilience, perseverance, time management and organisation. And these positive attitudes are important for educational success.