

ParentBrief



Managing homework: the structured approach

Most kids need to be motivated to complete homework. Rare is the child who will leap at the opportunity to forego social media or the latest app to complete a maths assignment.

Unfortunately, when our kids avoid homework, learning is compromised and in many cases reduced, their future opportunities appear threatened and we as parents are required to take a stand in one form or another.

Enter the structured homework approach. Not dissimilar to the behavioural boundaries we created when our kids were younger, a parental structured approach to managing homework gives kids clear guidelines regarding boundaries and expectations for successfully complete homework and handing it in on time.

Establishing a Structured Approach

A structured approach to homework applies a combination of principles of reinforcement and assertiveness to managing a child's homework behaviour. It involves initially setting guidelines and boundaries, especially for kids who seem unable, for whatever reason (which can unfortunately include over involvement and misplaced responsibility on our part), to do it on their own.

These guidelines include:

- determining pretty much where our child will study
- time limit
- the level of work that is and is not acceptable
- rewarding or penalising your child's efforts
- being quite firm and assertive about doing schoolwork

A structured approach also includes the use of external motivation to help our kids do what they do not feel like doing and internal motivation when they are initially attracted to the work.

How parents can help manage homework behaviour

- **Provide a suitable study area:** be guided by your child's learning style. Some kids require a quiet corner, others a desk, and some work better sitting on their bed. Unlike the Internet, the use of Apps or social media is not usually required for homework, but working to music with an iPod or iPad may suit some kids.
- **Managing time:** help your child to prioritise what homework needs to be done first, what time to start and finish.
- **Reminders about responsibility:** we need to remind ourselves and our kids that homework is their responsibility.
- **Communicate expectations:** when kids turn on the excuses, be prepared with the classic one liner "you have to do it."
- **Appropriate praise and positive incentives:** praise both the process and the end product and initially don't hold back on appropriate incentives until homework behaviour is established.
- **Penalties do apply:** social media and TV are distractions, so identify privileges and valued possessions that can be withdrawn if needs be.
- **Draw up a behavioural contract:** some kids need it in writing, so if homework noncompliance has become an issue, draw up a contract to be signed by both parties. As with all contracts, penalties apply.
- **Communicate with the school:** ongoing dialogue with teachers means kids have nowhere to go with excuses.

By using a combination of principles of reinforcement and assertiveness and showing our kids the basics of how to do their homework, they hopefully will soon have the confidence and skills to take total responsibility for doing it themselves.