

ParentBrief



Are your kids procrastinating?

Let's be honest – we all do it. We've all delayed doing things even when we see there are disadvantages in the delay.. But what is it about procrastination that stops us from learning the price of procrastination? Why are we so often repeat offenders? Is it a lack of confidence in our ability to do the task; is it fear of not doing the task exactly right; is it laziness, frustration, boredom, attitude or just the state of being human? Sometimes we can behave like Peter Pan – pursuing fun at the expense of priorities.

We know there'll be a price to pay If your kids are procrastinating about homework, there are strategies that you, the parent, can put into play to help them put off putting off homework...

Techniques to teach kids who are putting off doing their school assignments or homework

- **Knock-out technique.** The harder and more boring the work, the better it is to do it immediately. Help to identify the homework where this technique can apply.
- **Worst-first approach.** Identify the most difficult aspect of homework and do that first. Sometimes kids won't do the easiest part of the homework due to anxiety about having to do the most difficult. Ask your child to describe what he has to do and tell you which activities are the hardest and make a start on these immediately.
- **Bits and Pieces approach.** Kids can easily feel overwhelmed by homework, especially if they're a perfectionist. Encourage them to make a start, and work from there, doing more and more until homework doesn't seem so impossible.

- **Salami technique.** Just as salami tastes better eaten in small pieces, so two a large project broken down into simpler pieces.
- **Remember-forget technique.** If your child is forgetting what to do in homework, teach her that whenever she remembers forgetting to do something, to do at least some of it immediately.
- **Five-minute plan.** Getting started is easier if kids work on something for five minutes. Ask them to agree to work for another five and then another five. After fifteen minutes, they'll be well into the homework.
- **Switching.** Switching encourages kids to learn to take the momentum they've gained from doing one activity they enjoy to immediately switching over to one they've been putting off. Time playing an app, to time doing homework.
- **Premack procedure.** As distinct from Switching, the Premack Procedure (names after the scientist who discovered it) involves kids selecting an activity they really enjoy and not allowing themselves to participate until after they've finished their homework.
- **Referenting.** Kids who procrastinate tend to think about the upside of not doing work and the downside of doing it. In Referenting, they reverse this pattern by writing down all the good things that will happen from doing work and all the bad thing from not. This list may need reviewing regularly!
- **Establishing a set time.** Encourage your child to schedule a set time to begin work ahead of time.
- **Establishing priorities.** Kids need to know which aspects of homework are most important and which are least. Ask your child to write down all the work due for completion in the next week. Then write down all the things he wants to do after school and on the weekend. Place a 1 next to most important, 2 next to fairly, and 3 next to not very.
- **Isolation.** Remove distractions, particularly any electronic devices. If they need to use the computer, sit with them and oversee.
- **Visible Reminders.** These can be printed notes on the bedroom door or electronic reminders. *I can do it; Do it now; Put off putting off.*

And finally, it almost goes without saying that if we as parents put off doing things we find boring or frustrating, our kids will learn from our example. So, be a good example your kids will learn from – put off, putting it off.