

# Doing homework is associated with change in students' personality

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Students who invest more effort in their homework show changes in conscientiousness. Credit: University of Tübingen

Homework may have a positive influence on students' conscientiousness. Results of a study conducted by University of Tübingen researchers suggests that students who do more homework than their peers show positive changes in conscientiousness. Thus, in addition to education, schools may be effecting changes of student personalities. The study results were published in the *Journal of Research in Personality*.

Previous research finds that homework effort is consistently related to [student](#) achievement. Also, [conscientiousness](#) appears to be the most important personality trait for predicting homework effort. With this connection in mind, proponents of homework have argued that the effort that students invest in their homework may have positive effects by influencing conscientiousness. In their study, the Tübingen scientists investigated whether this claim holds true.

They analyzed data from a longitudinal study with 2,760 students from two different [school](#) tracks in the German states of Baden-Württemberg and Saxony. Students were initially assessed right after their transition from primary to secondary school in fifth grade. For the next three years, students were assessed annually between six and eight weeks after the start of each school year. They answered questions regarding mathematics and German homework completion. They were also asked how conscientious they thought they were, including whether they would describe themselves as tidy or rather as messy and negligent. In addition to students' self-reports, parents were asked to assess their children's conscientiousness as well.

Results show that those students who invested a lot of effort in their homework between fifth and eighth grade also profited in terms of their conscientiousness. Previous research has shown that conscientiousness tends to undergo a temporary dip in late childhood and early adolescence. The results suggest that doing homework thoroughly and meticulously appeared to counterbalance this dip. Indeed, researchers

found a substantial decrease in conscientiousness for students who reported that they had not made an effort with their homework. Those results were also backed by parents, whose reports matched those of their children.

"Our results show that homework is not only relevant for school performance, but also for personality development – provided that students put a lot of effort into their assignments," says Richard Göllner, first author of the study. "The question whether doing your homework can also influence the development of conscientiousness has been mostly neglected in previous discussions of the role of homework," criticizes Ulrich Trautwein, director of the Hector Research Institute of Education Sciences and Psychology. "We need to define more precisely what expectations we have of the potential of [homework](#) and how those expectations can be fulfilled."

**More information:** Richard Göllner et al. Is doing your homework associated with becoming more conscientious?, *Journal of Research in Personality* (2017). DOI: [10.1016/j.jrp.2017.08.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2017.08.007)

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