

How to help your kids with homework—without doing it for them

January 24 2020, by Melissa Barnes and Katrina Tour



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Parents are [a child's first and most important teachers](#). Parent involvement in their child's learning can [help improve](#) how well they do in school. However, when it comes to helping kids with homework, it's

not so simple.

While it's important to show support and model learning behavior, there is a limit to how much help you can give without robbing your [child](#) of the opportunity to learn for themselves.

Be involved and interested

An [analysis of more than 400 research studies](#) found [parent involvement](#), both at school and at home, could improve students' academic achievement, engagement and motivation.

School involvement includes parents participating in events such as parent-teacher conferences and volunteering in the classroom. Home involvement includes parents talking with [children](#) about school, providing encouragement, creating stimulating environments for learning and finally—helping them with homework.

The paper found overall, it was consistently beneficial for parents to be involved in their child's education, regardless of the child's age or socioeconomic status. However, this same analysis also suggested parents should be cautious with how they approach helping with homework.

Parents helping kids with homework was linked to higher levels of motivation and engagement, but lower levels of academic achievement. This suggests too much help may [take away from the child's responsibility](#) for their own learning.

Help them take responsibility

Most children don't like homework. Many parents agonize over helping

their children with homework. Not surprisingly, this [creates a negative emotional atmosphere](#) that often results in questioning the value of homework.

Homework has often been linked to student achievement, promoting the idea children who complete it will do better in school. The most [comprehensive analysis on homework and achievement to date](#) suggests it can influence academic achievement (like test scores), particularly for children in years seven to 12.

But more research is needed to find out about how much homework is appropriate for particular ages and what types are best to maximize home learning.

When it comes to parent involvement, [research suggests](#) parents should help their child see their homework as an opportunity to learn rather than perform. For example, if a child needs to create a poster, it is more valuable the child notes the skills they develop while creating the poster rather than making the best looking poster in the class.

Instead of ensuring their child completes their homework, it's more effective for parents to support their child to increase confidence in completing homework tasks on their own.

Here are four ways they can do this.

1. Praise and encourage your child

Your positivity will make a difference to your child's approach to homework and learning in general. Simply, your presence and support creates a positive learning environment.

Our [study involved](#) working with recently arrived Afghani mothers who

were uncertain how to help their children with school. This was because they said they could not understand the Australian education system or speak or write in English.

However, they committed to sit next to their children as they completed their homework tasks in English, asking them questions and encouraging them to discuss what they were learning in their first language.

In this way, the [parents](#) still played a role in supporting their child even without understanding the content and the children were actively engaged in their learning.

2. Model learning behavior

Many [teachers model](#) what they would like their students to do. So, if a child has a problem they can't work out, you can sit down and model how you would do it, then complete the next one together and then have the child do it on their own.

3. Create a homework plan

When your child becomes overly frustrated with their homework, do not force them. Instead, together create a plan to best tackle it:

- read and understand the homework task
- break the homework task into smaller logical chunks
- discuss how much time is required to complete each chunk
- work backwards from the deadline and create a timeline
- put the timeline where the child can see it
- encourage your child to mark completed chunks to see the progress made on the task

4. Make space for homework

Life is busy. Parents can create positive study habits by allocating family time for this. This could mean carving out one hour after dinner for your child to do homework while you engage in a study activity such as reading, rather than watching television and relaxing. You can also create a comfortable and inviting reading space for the child to learn in.

Parents' ability to support their child's learning goes beyond [homework](#). Parents can engage their child in discussions, read with them, and provide them with other ongoing learning opportunities (such as going to a museum, watching a documentary or spending time online together).

This article is republished from [The Conversation](#) under a Creative Commons license. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by The Conversation

Citation: How to help your kids with homework—without doing it for them (2020, January 24) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-01-kids-homeworkwithout.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.