

Homework Strategies for Success

When your tween has a game plan for homework, it will go more smoothly and he'll produce better work. Share this guide to help him learn time management and organization skills—and make homework time more pleasant for everyone!



Establish a routine

Your middle grader can make homework a priority by scheduling it into his daily routine. Here are suggestions:

- Start by discussing the best time to do homework. Does your child need downtime before settling into homework, or does he prefer getting his work done right after school? Let him experiment to see when he works best.



- Have him try different homework conditions. Some students work better in silence, others with background music. If your middle grader has trouble concentrating at the kitchen table, he might stretch out on his bed.
- Your tween should keep school supplies handy in one place. He can include basics like pencils and paper, as well as a dictionary, a calculator, and a thesaurus.
- Be sure your child has a plan for bringing home books and papers. He should jot down each assignment in his agenda as it's given. Then, at the end of the school day, he can see at a glance what he needs.
- Decide if and when TV, video games, and computer play fit into his schedule. Consider setting a screen limit that gives

your middle grader enough time for homework, sleep, physical activity, and family and friends.

Provide support

To get the most out of homework, your child needs to complete the work herself. Resist the urge to provide answers or leap in and solve problems for her. Use these ideas for supporting her efforts:

- Discuss a plan for tackling her work. She might do harder assignments first and save easier ones for later. Or she could save her favorite subject for last so she has that to look forward to.
- Help your child break large projects into smaller chunks and assign due dates to herself for each. *Example:* For a geography report, she might do research first, then make an outline, write the report, and finally revise and proofread it.
- Before she begins, have your middle grader explain the directions to you to make sure she understands them. Encourage her to reread them when she finishes. Did she follow the instructions exactly?



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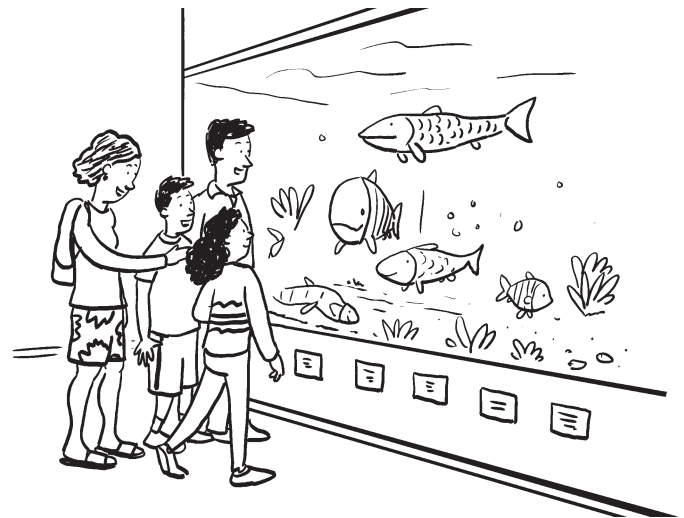
- Offer to help her answer her own questions when she gets stuck. If she asks, “What’s the difference between a physical change and a chemical change?” you can say, “Let’s read the chapter together and see if you can spot it.”
- Review homework together to make sure it’s complete. Let your youngster find mistakes herself. For instance, if she notices a math error, have her show you how she did the problem.
- Give her time on the family computer when she needs it for homework, or take her to the library to use a computer there.
- When your youngster chooses extracurricular activities, have her consider her homework load. Remind her to allow extra hours for projects and tests as she weighs her options.

Note: If your middle grader is struggling with homework, call or email her teacher. He will have ideas to help.

Keep it interesting

Encourage your tween to vary the way he does homework by adding a dose of fun. Try these tips:

- Your middle grader could start a homework group. Having friends around will make homework more enjoyable, and he’ll learn more, too. Quizzing each other and explaining material to each other helps children remember facts.
- Suggest that your youngster view assignments from a different angle. He might present an oral history report like a newscaster doing the evening news. Or he could turn a book report into an email exchange between two characters. *Note:* Make sure he checks with his teacher before taking a new approach.



- Plan a family activity to celebrate the end of a big assignment. For example, visit an aquarium when your child finishes a science project on sea life.
- Involve the whole family with games like “Social Studies Jeopardy.” Have your tween write answers and questions on index cards and act as the host. Making the cards and checking answers are great ways to study.
- Have your middle schooler take breaks, especially when tackling long or tough assignments. He might work for 30 minutes and then stop for 10 minutes to move around or eat a healthy snack.
- Find different places to do homework. Try the library, a coffee shop, the bookstore, or outside by a stream. Or see if your school, community center, library, or YMCA offers homework clubs.

Middle Years