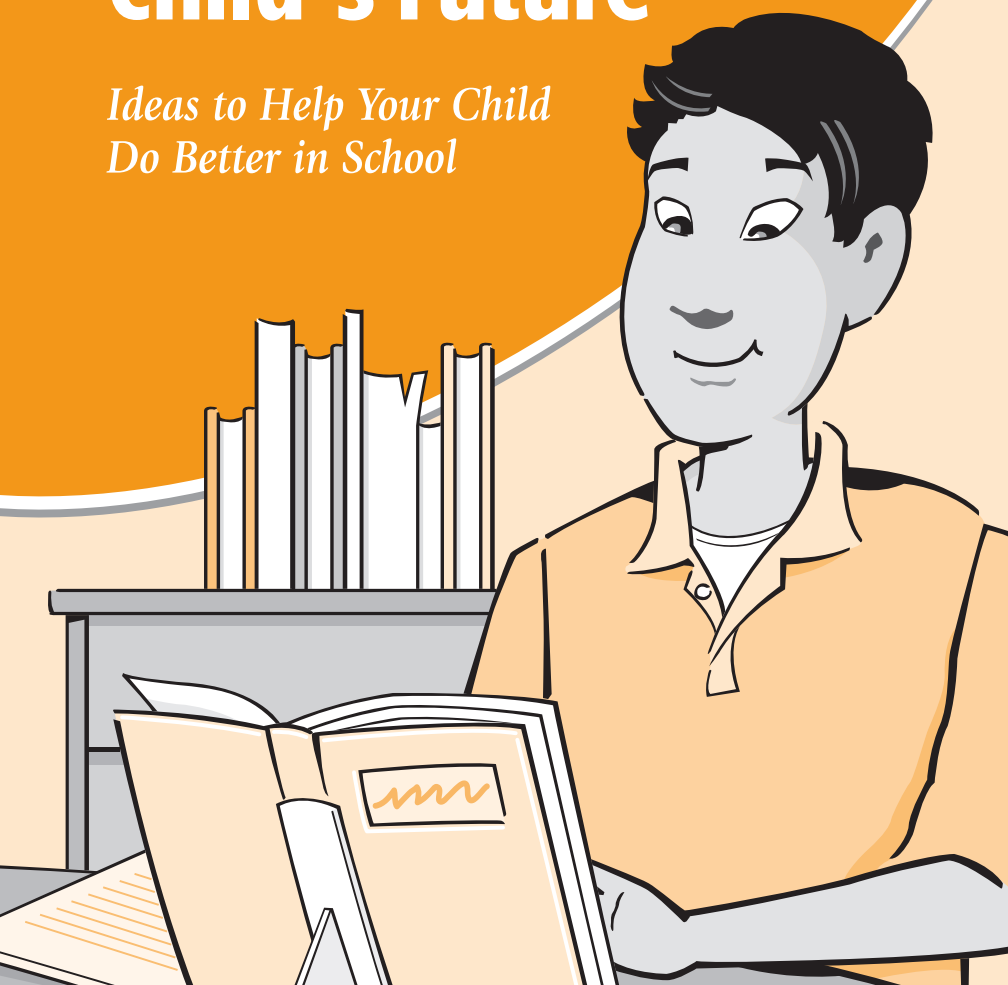


Why Studying is Important for Your Child's Future

*Ideas to Help Your Child
Do Better in School*



Homework & Study Skills Series

THE
PARENT
INSTITUTE®

‘Why should I study when I’ve spent all day at school?’

That’s a question many students ask themselves—and their parents. Perhaps you’ve heard your child say something similar to you. It’s important to know the answer, because studying has many benefits for your child’s future. Studying teaches students how to stick with challenging tasks, show serious effort and concentration, and set and reach goals.

Once children understand the reasons for studying, it becomes a meaningful task instead of seeming like a waste of time. This can prevent a lot of disagreements between parents and kids.

The most important thing to remember about studying is that it’s the student’s responsibility—not the parent’s. Doing your child’s assignments for him* will hurt his learning and self-esteem.

But there are ways you can help—and your help can make a big difference. This booklet explains the best ways for students and parents to work together to make studying successful.

** Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We’ll alternate the use of “he” and “she” throughout this booklet.*



Why is Studying Important?

It can be hard for kids to see the effect that education will have on their future—especially when they can't imagine ever using anything they're learning in school right now.

But if you help your child recognize the link between good study habits and her future, she'll see that education *does* make a difference!

To help your child connect the importance of doing well in school with achieving success in life, you might put it in terms of the bottom line.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, over a 50-year period of an adult's working life:

- A **high school dropout** will earn about \$1.3 million.
- A **high school graduate** can expect, on average, to earn \$1.8 million.
- A **person with a bachelor's degree** can expect to earn \$3 million.
- A **person with a master's degree** can expect to earn \$3.6 million.
- A **person with a doctoral degree** can earn an average of \$4.5 million.
- A **person with a professional degree** can earn \$4.8 million.

Let your child see that the sky's the limit. When your child believes that her future is bright, she will be much more likely to set goals, study hard and stay in school.

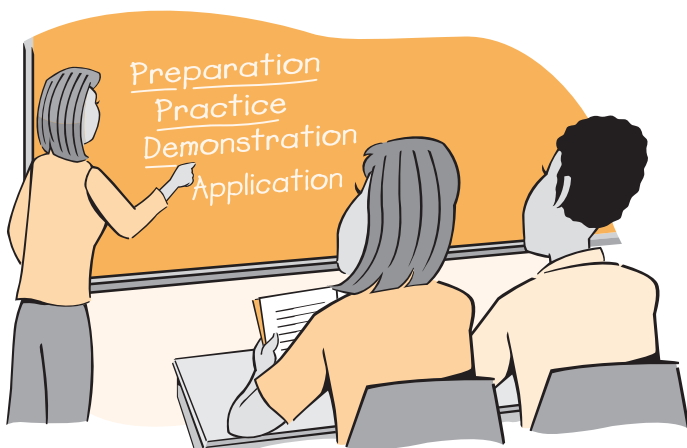


Studying is a Major Responsibility

Studying is one of your child's first major responsibilities in school. It helps develop independence and confidence—traits that are essential as your child grows older and studying affects his grades more and more. When your child studies, he also:

- **Increases understanding.** Working at home allows your child to learn and review at his own pace. Studying will also help your child remember material better.
- **Becomes self-disciplined.** Studying well requires motivation, planning and time management. With practice, your child will improve his study skills and be able to work more quickly and effectively.
- **Communicates with teachers.** Homework assignments and tests show teachers whether your child understands the lessons.
- **Develops perseverance.** When your child finishes assignments, he can see that hard work leads to pride and success.
- **Builds research skills.** Learning to find information teaches your child how to research school subjects, as well as his own interests.
- **Connects home and school.** Studying gives your child the chance to discuss school with you, work through problems and celebrate successes.





Homework Has Four Purposes

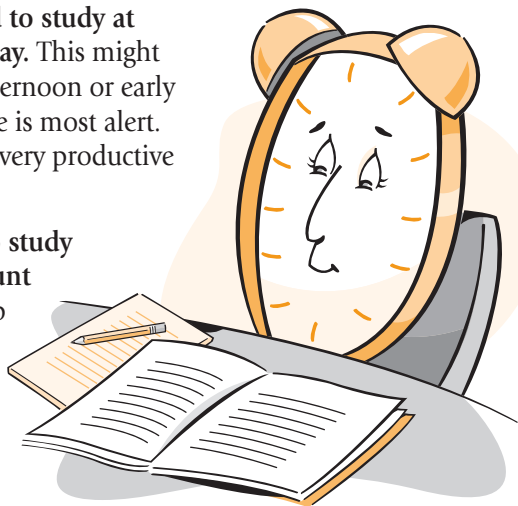
A large component of studying is the daily homework your child's teacher assigns. When teachers give specific assignments, it's usually for one of four reasons. Understanding these reasons will help you and your child make study time more rewarding:

1. **Preparation.** Some assignments get students ready for upcoming topics. If the teacher plans a lesson about the Revolutionary War, for instance, students will first need to learn about the events that preceded it. Preparation homework often requires reading or research.
2. **Practice.** Doing the same kind of work repeatedly helps students learn—for example, writing down vocabulary words, reciting multiplication tables or solving practice problems.
3. **Demonstration.** It's important to have students use different skills to show what they've learned. Projects such as preparing an oral report, building a model, writing a paper or putting on a play encourage creativity and demonstrate thorough understanding of concepts.
4. **Application.** When students are asked to compare and contrast two historic events, do a science experiment or solve a real-life problem, they are learning to apply their knowledge to new situations.

Require a Study Routine

Here's a question parents should *not* ask: "Do you have homework today?" Kids do best in school when they study every day. If your child doesn't have homework assignments, he can use the time to read or review. These ideas will help your child develop a good study routine:

- **Encourage your child to study at the same time each day.** This might be in the morning, afternoon or early evening—whenever he is most alert. (Late at night is not a very productive time.)
- **Require your child to study for a minimum amount of time.** This will keep him from rushing through topics and assignments. The teacher can give you guidance on how much time is appropriate.
- **Suggest that your child study subjects in the same order every day.** Some kids study the hardest subjects first since they demand the most energy and motivation. But some kids get motivated by getting the easiest tasks out of the way. Find out what works best for your child.
- **Make study time a family quiet time.** This means that while your child studies, you do things such as pay bills or read. This sends the message that schoolwork is a family priority.
- **Encourage your child to take five-minute breaks every 20 to 30 minutes.** They help students think better.



How Involved Should Parents Be?

Research shows that the most successful students have parents who monitor schoolwork. So it's important for you to be home during homework and study time. That doesn't mean you have to stand over your child while she studies. It means you should be available to advise and give support.

Here are some ways you can help without actually doing the work for your child:

- **Look over homework with your child.** Before she starts studying, make sure she understands the assignment. Discuss how she'll complete the assignment. Does she have all the supplies she'll need?
- **Provide guidance.** With a younger child or a child who struggles with schoolwork, it helps to work together at first. Help your child get the hang of the assignment. Then let her do the work.
- **Check with the teacher.** Should you look over the work and help your child make corrections? Or does the teacher prefer to see the mistakes?
- **Let your child study independently,** but stay nearby to supervise and give encouragement.
- **Avoid over-involvement.** As your child gets older and more capable, you should help less. But continue to show interest and pride in her work.

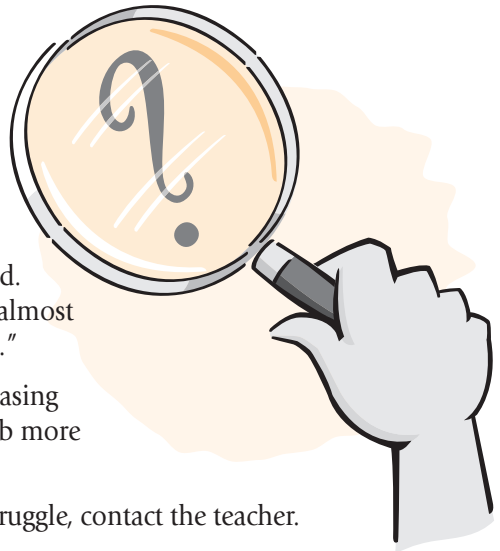


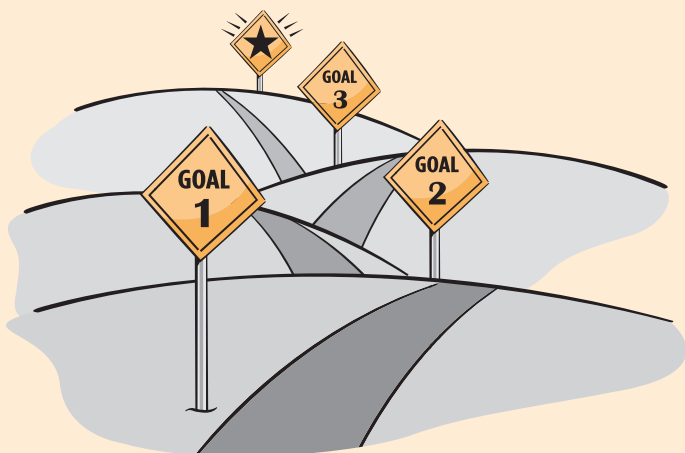
Try These Tutoring Tips

Students of all ages and abilities struggle with homework at times. If your child tries his hardest and still struggles, it's fine for you to help. Here are some tips for tutoring your child:

- **Make sure your child has understood the directions.** His trouble may be with following instructions rather than with the assignment itself.
- **Be positive.** Start by saying something nice. Then offer to help in difficult areas. For example, "You've written a great paper. But I see a few grammar mistakes. Would you like me to help?"
- **Help your child work step-by-step.** Big projects become much less intimidating when they're divided into small parts.
- **Give the message that you're there to help, not criticize.** Sit beside your child rather than across from him. And try to make eye contact. It will be easier to see any confusion your child might have.
- **Use teaching strategies,** such as asking questions, giving clues and letting your child explain concepts to you.
- **Stay positive,** even if your child gets discouraged. For example, say, "You've almost got it," not, "That's wrong."
- **Have some fun.** Gentle teasing and puns can make the job more enjoyable for both of you.

If your child continues to struggle, contact the teacher.





Talk About the Future

Ask your child, “What do you see yourself doing when you grow up?” Let your child tell you about her hopes and dreams for the future. As you listen, here’s how you can keep your child motivated to study:

- **Be sure to take her interest in a future career seriously** (even though it will most likely change several times over the years).
- **Help her learn more.** Say, “Let’s find out what you need to do to prepare yourself for a job like that.” Then post some goals she needs to reach along the way.
- **Talk about how establishing good study habits now can affect those goals.**
- **Relate schoolwork to real life.** Talk about how reading and writing skills have helped you at work. Discuss the many ways people use math and science in everyday life—and in their professions.
- **Expect success.** Your child is more likely to be motivated to do well if you believe in her. Say things like, “I know you can do it.”
- **Show interest.** Ask frequently about what your child is studying. Continue to send the message that schoolwork is interesting and important to your child’s future success.



Avoid These Study Mistakes

The biggest mistake parents make when it comes to monitoring their children's studying is *doing the work for them*. This not only hurts kids' self-esteem by suggesting that they are not capable of doing the work, but it also takes away opportunities to learn.

Here are some other parent "don'ts" to keep in mind:

- **Don't help too quickly.** Let your child work hard before you step in. If he asks, "How do you spell *icicle*?" or "What were the causes of the Great Depression?" suggest ways he can find the answer himself instead of giving it to him.
- **Don't rescue.** If your child procrastinates, let him face the natural consequence—possibly getting a bad grade. Next time, he's likely to work harder.

- **Don't compare your child with others** by saying things like, "Why can't you be like your brother?" Remember that children learn in unique ways and at different paces.



- **Don't use studying as punishment.** This can make your child see studying as unpleasant instead of rewarding.
- **Don't expect perfection.** Let your child use mistakes as an opportunity to learn.
- **Don't talk negatively about homework.** Treat it as an important responsibility that your child can be proud of handling.
- **Don't over-schedule your child.** Studying is your child's biggest responsibility. If other activities interfere with it, cut back on them.

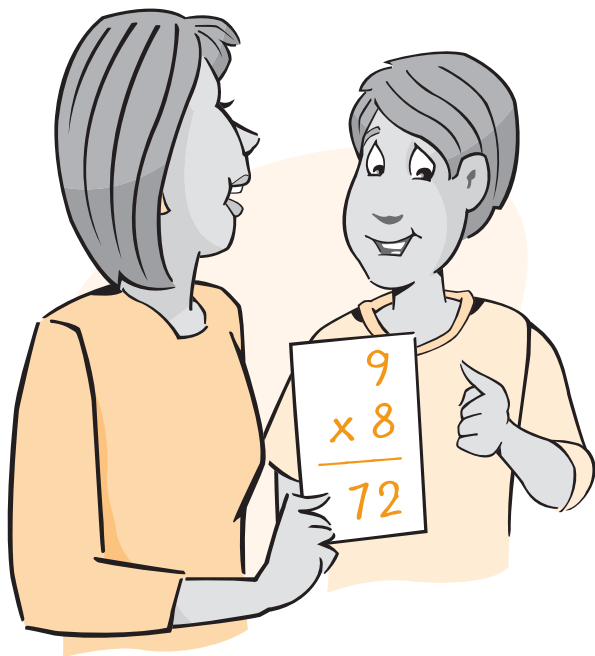
What if Your Child Won't Study?

Your child has a perfect study spot, a set study time and lots of support from you. But she's still not studying. What's wrong? Sometimes the problem is motivation. These ideas can help:

- **Challenge your child.** Ask her how long a homework task should take. Then set a timer and see if she can "beat the clock."
- **Suggest "self-rewards."** Have your child decide what she'd like to do during a study break, such as have a snack or call a friend. Once she's worked for a while, she can enjoy this activity.



- **Provide incentives.** Plan to watch a movie or go out for ice cream when your child finishes a project. Or give your child one point for each assignment she finishes. Five to 10 points might earn her a special privilege.
- **Use consequences.** Tell your child that the result of not doing homework is losing privileges. She may not watch TV, talk on the phone or see friends until homework is done. Then be sure to follow through on what you've said.



Other Things Parents Can Do

Whether or not your child is having problems with studying, there are other ways you can always help. Here are some of them:

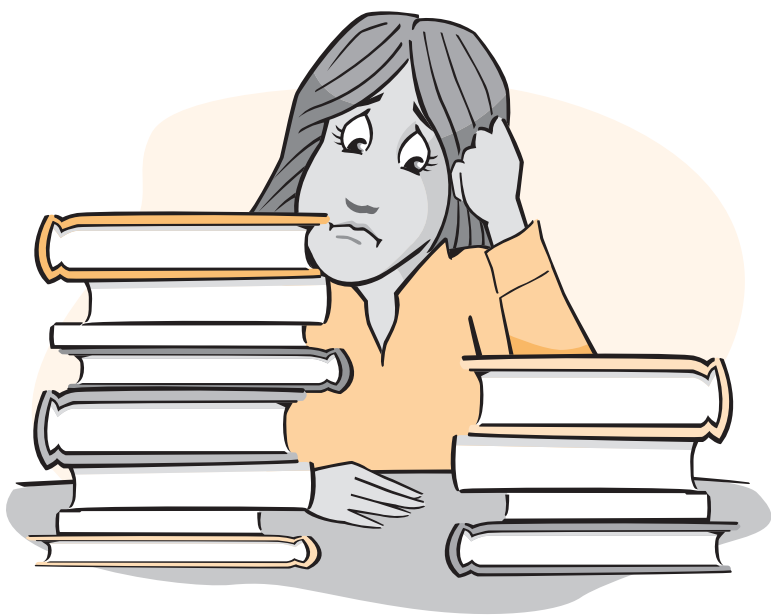
- **Talk with your child's teachers.** Learn about homework and studying expectations. Ask how you can help at home.
- **Emphasize that cramming for a test** isn't as effective as studying over several nights.
- **Review with your child.** Ask him practice questions. Call out vocabulary words. Show him how to use flash cards.
- **Use specific praise.** Your child needs to hear exactly what he's doing right. For example, say, "You finished that project on time because you planned ahead"—and not just, "Good job."

Ask to see graded assignments. Talk about the teacher's marks and notes. Compliment your child's progress.

When Should You Contact the Teacher?

If despite your best efforts your child isn't studying well, it's important to contact the school. As a team, you can work to solve the problem. It's time to call the teacher if:

- **Your child refuses to study** no matter what you say or do.
- **You and your child do not understand** homework instructions.
- **Assignments are usually too hard** or too easy for your child.
- **Some days your child has no homework** and others she is overwhelmed with it.
- **Your child has missed a lot of school** and assignments.
- **A personal problem is affecting your child's ability to study.** Or you are unable to provide basic study supplies.



Studying is a basic part of learning.
And the most effective learning occurs
when students understand why studying
is important and then learn to do
it well. When parents are supportive
and students are skilled at studying,
success is sure to follow.



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