

1-2-3 Magic Parenting Newsletter – September 2013

Homework Do's and Don'ts – Part I

Homework hassles can make school nights miserable for the whole family. For some families homework battles can go on for two, three or four hours per night. People begin to dread the evening, relationships are strained severely and the child in question learns to hate schoolwork more and more. There are no easy answers to the problem; children's needs vary depending upon their intelligence and the presence of handicaps such as learning disabilities and ADHD. There are ways though, of making things more tolerable and more productive.



IN THIS ISSUE

- Homework Do's and Don'ts – Part I
- Quick Tip: Checking Homework

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WHAT NOT TO DO

Don't go around asking the child every five minutes if he has homework or if he's started it yet. Instead try to pick the best time to start and stick with it—consistency is very important here.

Don't interrupt the youngster in the middle of his favorite TV show to tell him it's time to begin. There's no better way to get no cooperation. He should not start watching a show in the first place if it's going to overlap with his regular homework time.

Don't let the would-be student do work with the TV on. Believe it or not, a radio or iPod may be OK because it provides consistent background noise, but the television is always out to get your attention.

If you can avoid it, don't let the homework time change each day. One of the best ways of setting things up is to have the child come home, get a snack, goof off for about 30-45 minutes, and then sit down and try to finish his work before dinner. Then the whole evening is free.

WHAT TO DO

Consider trying the following steps in order (you can combine them as you go), and be sure to use plenty of positive reinforcement with whatever else you are doing.

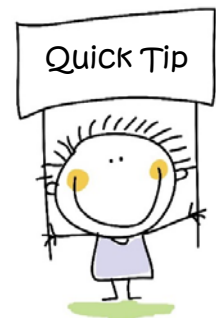
1. Natural Consequences

If you are having trouble with homework for the first time—say with a fourth grader—consider using Natural Consequences first. That means do nothing. Keep your mouth shut and see if the child and the teacher can work things out. If this approach doesn't seem to be working after a few weeks, then go on to the next step. (Natural Consequences is obviously not the method to use if you have been having homework problems for years and years.)

2. An Assignment Sheet

Assignment sheets or notebooks can be extremely helpful. They tell you exactly what work is due for each subject. Many schools now have web sites where forgetful but fortunate kids access their homework assignments online. The idea of the assignment sheet, of course, is that after the child does the work, parents can check it out against the list of items to be done. If this is the procedure you are considering, you must routinely include two basic principles: the "PNP (Positive Negative Positive) Method" and the "Rough Checkout." Failure to do so will result in unnecessary misery.

Next month: Homework Do's and Don'ts – Part II.



Checking Homework

Every time your child brings you some homework to check, **the first thing you say must be positive**, even if it's only the fact that he brought the work to you. Kids will never want to bring you anything if your first response is consistently to shoot from the hip with criticism.