

Prepared for:

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Helping Children Get Organized For Homework and Schoolwork

One of a series of Parent Guides from



Elementary Version

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Get a good start at the end

The end of your child's school day is a time to wind down, but it is also a time to get started—these last few minutes are critical for preparing for her evening and the next morning. Following are some things your child should do at the end of the school day:

1 Write down or check assignments in an assignment notebook. This step will vary according to your child's grade in school, and the materials she receives. Some schools supply children with an assignment notebook. If not, give one to your child.

Many teachers, especially in the elementary grades, will post the night's homework at the end of the day. If your child's teacher does this, your child should write the assignments down as the teacher is posting them. But if your child is in middle or high school, and has several teachers, she will have to write down assignments after every class period. For her, the end of the day is the time to check that she has done so. She should have a way to contact someone—the teacher, a friend in the class—to get any assignments she has missed.

When you first start this system, or if your child is having a hard time remembering to write things in her assignment notebook, you can check each day when she gets home to see what's been entered into it. If she doesn't have anything written down, she should definitely check with a classmate to make sure she knows the assignment. If there really isn't an assignment for a subject, she should write that, rather than just leave it blank.

2

Make sure she has all necessary materials. One quick, easy way to do this is to give your child a set of stickers, or self-stick notes. Have her put a sticker or note on everything that has to go home that night. Another idea is to make a list throughout the day of materials to go home and check them off as she packs them.

3

Pack materials.

Beginning in kindergarten, every student needs a backpack or sturdy bag to carry things between home and school. When at school, your child's backpack should stay in the same place (probably a hook, cubby or locker), until it's time to pack up. That way, she can quickly grab it, pack and go.



4 Make sure the backpack gets home. If your child walks or bikes home from school, the backpack should not leave her shoulders until she's in the door. If she goes by car, bus or other transportation, have her always ask herself, "Do I have my backpack?" as she is preparing to leave the vehicle.

Develop a Routine for Nightly Homework

Students who stick to an established study routine are more likely to do better on tests. They also keep themselves on track to complete their nightly homework and make steady progress on long-term assignments. Following are some ideas for helping your child establish an efficient homework routine.

- 1 Change gears before getting started.** Few students can walk straight in the door from a busy day at school, and immediately plop down to effectively complete homework. Suggest a light snack and something to drink. Many children also need 15 to 30 minutes of physical activity to refresh and relax before beginning their work.
- 2 Begin with the most challenging assignment.** Your child will probably have more energy at the beginning of his homework time and less at the end. So he should start with the work that will take the most energy. However, this part of the homework should not reduce him to frustration each day. If it does, let his teacher know at once.
- 3 Build in short breaks.** Encourage your child to pause for 10 minutes after finishing the first part of his work. He may need to stretch, visit the bathroom, or get a glass of water. No TV, phone or Internet during breaks!
- 4 Spend some time on a long-term project.** Read a chapter for next week's test, do some research for an upcoming project, or revise the first draft of a paper that's due in a few days. Then take another short break.
- 5 Finish up with easier assignments.** The end of homework time can be used to complete assignments that are typically not difficult for your child.
- 6 Be flexible when needed.** The above routine should usually work well, but there will be evenings when your child will not have time to do it all and still get to sleep at an appropriate hour. On those evenings, give top priority to assignments due the next day.



Tips for Organizing Different Areas of Schoolwork

Organization is not just about having a place for everything and sticking to a schedule. With schoolwork, organization also means having a plan or a system for tackling your studies. Here are some suggestions for your child.

- 1 Read the SQ3R way.** This stands for *Survey* (look the material over), *Question* (ask yourself questions about it, such as "what is the main idea?"), *Read* (read the material through carefully), *Restate* (put it in your own words) and *Review* (read it again until you know it well).
- 2 Keep numbers lined up properly.** Many math mistakes happen to children who know how to do the problems, but they put one or more numerals or symbols in the wrong place! Have your child try using graph paper to do math homework. Now he can put one numeral or symbol in each box. It is much easier to keep them in a straight line this way.
- 3 Put each spelling word** on a 3" x 5" card. This will allow your child to manipulate the words—an especially good organizational technique for visual or hands-on learners. Now your child can flip through the cards as he says the words aloud. He can post them in spots around his room where he frequently looks. He can lay them out on the floor and put them in alphabetical order.