

How to Eliminate Homework Hassles in 30 Minutes A Day

Workshop Handout

<http://sandyflemingonline.com/how-to-eliminate-homework-hassles-in-30-minutes-a-day/>



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Introduction

This handout is designed to be used with the webinar, “How to Eliminate Homework Hassles in 30 Minutes A Day.” Get more information about the webinar and register to watch the recording at <http://sandyflemingonline.com/how-to-eliminate-homework-hassles-in-30-minutes-a-day/>. The handout also includes a ton of resources and suggestions that go far beyond the contents of the webinar, so be sure to keep it handy so you can refer to it again and again. There are printable charts, hands-on strategies that WORK for taming the homework monster, encouragement, and much more. Best of all, you’re not alone in this battle! Nearly every family faces the Homework Monster in some form while the kids are in school. Now, you have the help you need to defeat the monster and get on with your family life.

Answering Three Essential Questions



1. _____

Personalized plan to answer this question:

Step 1: _____

Step 2: _____

Step 3: _____

Step 4: _____

Step 5: _____

How will I act on this information? _____

2. _____



Personalized plan to answer this question:

Step 1:

Step 2:

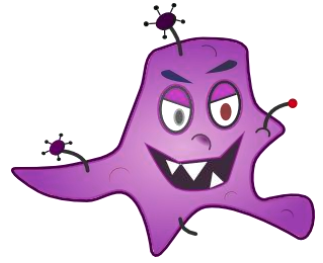
Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

How will I act on this information? _____

3. _____



Personalized plan to answer this question:

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

How will I act on this information? _____



Developing Five Helpful Habits

Who needs to build these habits? _____

Habit 1: _____

What good does it do? _____

How can we grab this benefit? _____

Habit 2: _____

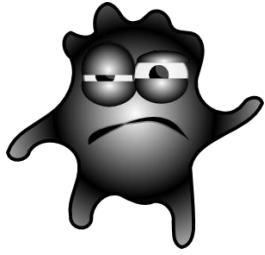
What good does it do? _____

How can we grab this benefit? _____

Habit 3: _____

What good does it do? _____

How can we grab this benefit? _____



Habit 4: _____

What good does it do? _____

How can we grab this benefit? _____

Habit 5: _____

What good does it do? _____

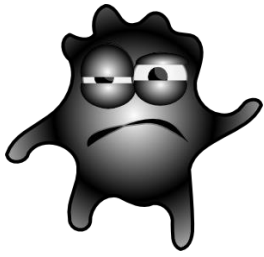
How can we grab this benefit? _____

Using One Overlooked Solution

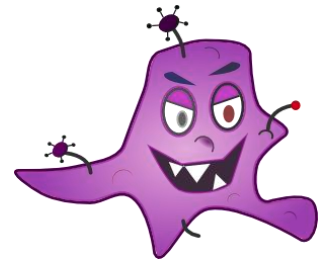
The One Overlooked Solution is: _____

Here's why it matters: _____

Ways to Build This Skill (Put a star by the one you want to try first):



Building Your Homework Routine



Keeping skills current with academic demands are critical to avoiding the Homework Monster. Consistent time, place, routine, and expectations are critical to avoiding the Homework Monster. Which set of skills will help with your Monster? Build your routine to stop the Monster in its tracks.

Allow 5 minutes to get organized before each homework session. Spend 10 minutes sharpening skills in any weak areas, and then spend 15 minutes reading or writing, since the need for these things never changes.

Follow this routine especially on days with no school assignments, and even over vacations. Extend the practice and reading/writing times for middle and high school students. Many organizations suggest 10 minutes per grade level, so consider 60 minutes total for sixth graders, 80 for eighth graders, and so forth.

For younger students (grades K-2), consider alternating practice and reading times on a daily basis to keep the amount of time spent within the guidelines. For any student, eliminate parts of this routine when school assignments demand more than the recommended amount of time.

The key is flexibility. Keep the goals in mind: get the kids in the habit of knowing they will work on academic pursuits a certain amount of time each day. Build skills so that homework assignments take less time. Increase independence on homework assignments. The Homework Routine is intended to supplement school work, not become the focus of the work.

Our Homework Routine (child's grade ____ x 10 min. total= _____):

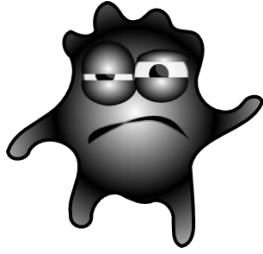
_____ Minutes to get organized.

_____ School Assignments (on average)

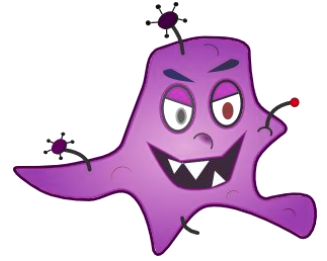
_____ Minutes of skills practice

Total Time: _____

_____ Minutes of reading/writing



Homework Hints and Helps



When Getting Ready for Homework:

- Be sure to be consistent in your expectations.
- Have common supplies readily available.
- Ensure homework is completed in a quiet, distraction-free zone.
- Make sure your student is physically comfortable-seated in a chair/desk/table that fits his or her stature, feet on the ground (or a stool), able to reach work surface comfortably, etc.), not too warm or cool, not hungry or thirsty, not overly-tired.
- Be ready to supervise and monitor as needed.

During Homework Time:

- Limit distractions, especially verbal/auditory and visual.
- Set a timer to encourage efficient work.
- Set up breaks for long projects.
- Reward an appropriate length of focus and effort.
- Be sure the student reads and understands the directions.

When the Work is Finished:

- Create a system to check for completeness and accuracy.
- Create a routine for putting work/books/etc. into the book bag to return to school.
- Use any remaining time in the Homework Routine to practice weak skills and/or practice reading and writing.
- Reward your student for a job well done.

Suggestions for Troubleshooting:

- Remember that windows, clutter, and noises from outside the room can be distracting.
- If your child is having difficulty focusing for an appropriate length of time, try measuring how long he or she is currently staying on task. Do this by watching and recording “on task” or “off task” every minute for a few days’ worth of homework sessions. Average the numbers to find the typical attention span. Set a timer for this amount and watch during the period. If the child maintains focus until the timer sounds, offer a reward. Gradually increase the time periods you expect attention until you reach a reasonable length for the child’s age and grade placement. In general, young elementary students should be able to stay on task for fifteen to twenty minutes, upper elementary students for thirty to forty-five minutes, middle schoolers for at least an hour, and high schoolers between 90-120 minutes.
- If your student is easily overwhelmed by assignments, try to find ways to break them up into smaller chunks or steps. Fold papers so that only the first row of problems is visible, make a checklist of steps to complete for the assignment, and so forth.
- If appropriate, create a reference sheet (or let your student create it) showing relevant formulas, procedures, or other details to be used with the assignment.
- Develop a flow chart that shows the tasks necessary to complete the problem or assignment and what to do in the event of a difficult part.
- Check the students work after two or three problems to make sure he or she is on the right track.
- Make a checklist of the steps involved in the assignment and have your student check each one off as it is completed.
- For longer and more elaborate assignments, set up a calendar with due dates for portions of the assignment or milestones. Do this even if these are not actually to be turned in to the teacher-they will help your student learn to plan larger projects.
- Encourage your student to write a sentence or two about what was covered in each class/subject area in a notebook daily. This information will be helpful to complete assignments later on and to study for tests.
- Follow a specific study plan such as SQ3R when reading textbook assignments. That particular plan suggests that students first skim or Survey the material to be read, write down questions that a more detailed reading will answer, then Read the material, Recite the answers to the questions they wrote and/or the questions in the assignment, and Review the material one more time to make sure it is remembered.

Charts and Worksheets for Parents

In education, a change is not official until it has been documented. Families can take a hint. Nothing gets changed without an intentional plan, and you can't rely on your memory to evaluate those changes. Keep records of what is going on! If you wish, you can use some of these blank charts and graphs to document changes in behavior and school performance. Be sure to reward EVERYONE (yourself and your students) for a job well done!

Remember that "goals" are far more specific and measurable than "wishes." Wishes are things that we hope will change. We may even want them to change by magic. On the other hand, goals are changes that we plan to make. They are measurable, and everyone who reads the goal will know right away if we met it (or are meeting it) or not.

Choose a specific behavior or outcome that you want to end up with. Make sure that it is observable and measurable. Things like "improve grades" and "do homework willingly" don't cut it. They are not measurable or specific. If I popped over to your house, your idea of what meets those goals and mine will be different. We'd be looking for different things and measuring success using different criteria.

Instead, make sure that the goals you write for yourself and for your students are very, very clear. Make them countable or measurable. Be sure they are within reach. Give them a time limit. Write a goal or two for yourself and for your student now:

Set Some Goals:

For yourself:

For your student:

Time on Task Observations

Student: _____ Date: _____ Time Start: _____ Time End: _____

Total Minutes: _____ Minutes on Task: _____ Minutes on Task per hour: _____

Key: + = on task minute - = off task minute

Bringing Home Assignments/Materials

Student will bring home necessary assignment information and materials from school 90% of the time (9 days out of every 10).

Date	yes	no

Date	yes	no

Date	yes	no

Starting Homework

Student will begin homework tasks within five minutes of agreed start time or verbal prompt to do homework _____ % of the time with no more than one verbal prompt.

Date	yes	no

Date	yes	no

Date	yes	no

Helpful Resources

Practice Resources to Build Skills:

Math Facts:

- Use a deck of cards with the face cards removed. Flip two cards and add or multiply.
- Play dominoes and score points when the end dominoes total to a number having a specific factor, such as divisible by 3 or by 7.
- Roll one or two dice and add or multiply the total. Keep rolling and adding or multiplying, then add to the previous total until the score passes 100, 1000, or 10,000.
- Arrange colored candies or beads into arrays and write down the multiplication and division facts represented by the display.

Sentence Structure:

- Cut out headlines from newspapers and clip the words apart. Mix them up and make headlines that make sense.
- Write sentences of 8-15 words, one word on each card. Mix up and arrange to make a complete grammatically correct sentence that uses all of the words.
- Reword sentences by combining small ones, separating large ones, or changing between active and passive voice.

Reading Comprehension:

- Create comprehension questions from reading material (with an answer key) and have a parent or adult respond to them.
- Summarize a paragraph, section, chapter or book.
- Write a new ending to a story.
- Write an epilogue that continues the story after the author has stopped.
- Write a prequel or origin story that explains where characters came from and what happened before the story started.

Phonics, Word Attack and Spelling:

- Complete crossword puzzles.
- Put messages into and out of secret codes.
- Play commercial word games.
- Play Hangman.
- Make smaller words from the letters in larger words or phrases.

Vocabulary Development:

- Find new words in books and use them in sentences or conversation.
- Make word pyramids by adding a new letter and rearranging the existing letters to make a new word with one more letter (or one less letter).
- Make a list of synonyms and antonyms for words.
- Make a list of words that refer to varying degrees of the same attribute (warm, hot, cool, cold, frigid) and put them in order of degree or intensity.
- Make lists of groups or categories of items.

Math Practice:

- Write story problems to given specifications (use division, answer between x and y, etc.).
- Make a list of measurements and have kids find items to match them.
- Choose phone numbers from a phone book or list and add, subtract, multiply, divide, make decimals, or name and state numerals' place value.

Writing Exercises:

- Choose a classified ad from the paper or internet and write the story of what happened before and/or after the ad was placed.
- Start a story and let your student finish it. Let your student start a story for you to finish.
- Write directions in a different format than they were originally presented. For example, if the directions are step by step, convert them into a how-to essay. If they are narrative, convert them into a step-by-step list.
- Use a calendar with lots of similar pictures. Have your student write a paragraph to describe one of them in enough detail that you can figure out which picture he or she is talking about.
- Write a paragraph (or more!) explaining what happened earlier in the day, or what is planned for later.

Homework Tips for Parents from the U.S. Dept. of Education:

<https://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/homework/homeworktips.pdf>

Ten Homework Help Tips from Scholastic.com:

<http://www.scholastic.com/parents/resources/article/homework-project-tips/10-homework-help-tips>

Supporting Your Learner from PBS:

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/supporting-your-learner/homework-help/>

Homework Tips for Parents from Reading Rockets:

<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/homework-tips-parents>

Surviving Homework Without Tears from Great Schools.org:

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/homework-without-tears/>

End Homework Hassles from Parenting.com:

<http://www.parenting.com/article/20-ways-to-end-homework-hassles>

Battles Over Homework: Advice for Parents from Psychology Today:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/pride-and-joy/201209/battles-over-homework-advice-parents>

About the Author

I'm a freelance educator, author, and educational consultant living in southwestern Michigan with husband and pets. I have three grown daughters who are making their way in the world, and I adore helping people reach their educational goals. I believe that all of us have a responsibility to make sure kids are learning and growing on track, and that parents are crucial to children's educational development. I also believe that we never, ever stop learning, and that all of us should be focused on keeping our minds sharp.

Drop by the website to see the latest posts, programs, publications and other offerings. You'll also find more Homework Help to keep you and your student on track and growing. See you around!

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