

Mrs Dowdell's Parenting Pointer

Homework Habits

Homework helps our children to learn to work independently and extends their learning. But, how on earth do we get our children to do it without a battle and how can we help them to establish good habits for learning? Here are some thoughts ...

Children don't automatically know how to organise themselves to do their homework. Once they get home from school, there are so many distractions; TV, computer games, after-school activities, friends, siblings etc. Children won't know how to structure their time to do homework without our help and the earlier we start the better. Even when children are very young, we can set up predictable, regular routines for reading together or playing educational games. This will help to develop these habits and make it easier to maintain them as children grow and homework becomes more important and demanding.



We may need to set up some limits around homework times. What would be a good time for homework to happen? Use the "when-then principle" to encourage children to engage. For example, "When you've finished your homework, then you can play on your Xbox" or "When you've read your book to me, then we can go outside and play football." Of course, they may still decide that they don't want to do their work and then we need to be prepared to follow through and not let them play on their Xbox or go out and play football. This may be hard for us to do but if we can remain calm and consistent, they will soon learn that we mean it.



We can be prepared for homework times by having all the stationery items ready that may be required to complete a task. That way we can fend off the "I can't find a pen" excuse for putting off homework for a bit longer. Maybe have a named drawer or box for each child to store their book bags, library books etc., so everyone knows where to find them. This encourages responsibility; if they can't find the item they need, it's because they haven't put it in the place you have provided. Of course, they probably

won't be very happy about this but if we always have to help them find things, they never learn independence. We also need to think about the best place to do homework; preferably at a table and definitely away from distractions. That may mean we have to turn off the TV, shut the dog in the kitchen, occupy a younger sibling, whatever we need to do to help our children to concentrate on the task.

If our children are really reluctant to complete homework, we can set up reward programmes. For example, we can give a sticker or point for every 10 minutes they spend reading with us, which they can exchange for a small prize or treat after they've accumulated an agreed number of awards. Or, they can earn minutes to play on computer games by doing their homework without complaining. When we support our children with their homework, it communicates that we value education and children with well-established homework habits will be better prepared for secondary school.

Got any questions? Need any help or advice? E-mail me at parenting@foundrylaneprimary.co.uk