
TWO WS AND AN H: ESTABLISHING A HOMEWORK ROUTINE

Tired of the disorganization, frustration and even tears that can come along with ordeal of homework time? Learning the When? Where? And How? of a homework routine can help build discipline and consistency along with academic confidence.

1. WHEN?

- **SCHEDULE HOMEWORK FOR A SET TIME EACH DAY.** Base this on your child's temperament: perhaps he's at his best right after school, or maybe after 30 to 60 minutes of downtime. Avoid late evening, which for most children and teens is meltdown time.
- **BE CONSISTENT FROM DAY TO DAY.** If after-school activities make that impossible, post a daily plan or weekly calendar in your kitchen that includes homework start and finish times each day.
- **SCHEDULE ENOUGH TIME** to complete assignments without rushing, based on your child's grade level and history of completing assignments. Have teachers let students know how long they expect an assignment to take and write in their agenda. This can help manage time.
- **GIVE ADVANCE NOTICE OF HOMEWORK TIME.** This is important, because kids with ADHD don't easily shift from one activity to another — especially from fun time to work time. You might say, "You can play for 15 more minutes, then come in for homework."

2. WHERE?

- **HELP YOUR CHILD SELECT A HOMEWORK PLACE.** Try the kitchen table, where she can spread out materials or perhaps your child would like to sit at a desk in the quiet den.
- **STEER CLEAR OF PROXIMITY TO ELECTRONICS (TV, CD PLAYER).** But if your child concentrates best with soft noise, try some instrumental background music or gamma waves
 - » [Quantum - Focus Music - Increase Focus, Concentration, Memory - Binaural Beats](#)
- **STAY NEARBY** (if possible). Kids with ADHD concentrate better when they know you're close by. If your child needs to use the bathroom, remind him to come right back afterward. After he leaves the bathroom, remind him to return to his work.
- **DO THE AFTER-SCHOOL REVIEW**
 - » **When your child gets home from school**, sit down with him and his updated planner. Together, review the homework assignments for the evening. You may be tempted to tell him what to do and when. Don't. Instead, pose a series of questions to help him set priorities: You might ask, "Do you think you should start with those math problems? Or would it be better to do your math after you finish outlining that chapter in your science book?"
 - » **There is no hard and fast rule about prioritizing.** For some children, the best approach is to get the hard stuff out of the way first. For others, breezing through something easy is a confidence-booster that helps motivate them to plow through harder assignments. But I often suggest get the most taxing work out of the way first when the brain is most fresh.
 - » **Make a helpful observation or two rooted in positivity:** "Last week you chose to work on your math first because you like it, and it's easy for you. But I've noticed that you're better at tuning in to details when you're freshest, so you may want to make proofreading your book report the first priority today."

2. WHERE? (continued)

- **SET A TIMER** - be it on a phone or a screen keep the timer on the other side of the room to minimize distractions: The use of a timer helps students build focused work time. Plus, kids with ADHD and LD may become fatigued due to distractibility, challenges to concentrating, frustration, and restlessness. Help your child recharge by scheduling frequent, short breaks.

- » On average, a student's focused work time is age plus 1 minute so this helps to teach

Set timer for 15 minutes of work time

- » If your child tries to stop before he's finished, encourage him to go on a bit longer, review work or move on to the next task, and remind him there'll be a break soon.
- » If your child becomes distracted during a segment of work, tap her on the shoulder, comments on well she is doing, and re-alert the brain to the task at hand.

Set timer for a 5 minute break

- » **For Parents:** During the 5 minute break check progress and review for completeness. This will help students learn to work at a pace that results in quality work.
- » **For Students:** move, walk-around, jump-rope for 2-3 minutes in between sections of work. Large motor movement enhances alertness.

Reset again for 15 minutes of work time and repeat as necessary, increasing the focused work time to 20, 25, 30, 35 minutes gradually over time - but always allow for a short break.



3. HOW?

- **SET UP RULES.** Draft and print a sheet that specifies: homework start and finish times; place; when and how long breaks are; and that you will be nearby to help her understand assignments, get organized, offer support — but not do the homework for her. Avoid arguments — calmly refer her to the Homework Rules.
- **HELP HER START.** Make sure your child knows what the assignment is and how to proceed. Offer assistance that matches her learning style.
 - » For a verbal processor, read directions to her or have him read them out loud;
 - » For a visual learner, show her how to use highlighters and colored markers to outline key words and sentences.
- **CHECK IN AT THE FINISH.** Review your child's work to see if it is complete. If your child consistently takes more time than she should, speak to her teacher to see if he's willing to adjust the amount of homework.
- **OFFER PRAISE.** Compliment your child when he stays on task, works with focus, is creative, and so on. Be specific. Say, for example, "I like the way you concentrated on that problem and stuck with it until you solved it." Show some love mid-homework; it helps to keep us going.
- **GIVE REWARDS.** It's OK to offer a "prize" to motivate. For a younger child, try extra playtime, a favorite snack or game, or a special read-aloud; for an older child, a favorite TV program, computer time, or phone time.
- **STICK WITH IT.** A new homework routine requires solid commitment. It takes one to three months for a routine to become a habit — even longer for a person with ADHD. But the payoff is discipline, self-control, and success-building skills.

4. ADDITIONAL HOMEWORK TIPS

- **PRIORITIZING:** Doing the hard stuff first is always a solid rule but sometimes deadlines are looming. If math or reading is a struggle don't ever leave it for the last task.

To reduce stress, organize work in to:

- » Must Do
- » Should Do
- » Could Do

- **HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?** Helping your student determine how long an assignment can take can be tricky. Some children have trouble gauging how long each assignment will take. If your child does, take him step by step through each assignment. For example, maybe your child thinks he'll need only 10 minutes to look up the definitions of 10 words and write a sentence using each — but you know it will take at least four times that long.

Point out that it could take one minute to look up each word, and up to three minutes to write each sentence. If she doubts you, time her as she completes the assignment, and show him how long the assignment actually took. At first, your child may resist your efforts to get her to plan and prioritize. Eventually, though, she should begin to see how helpful the process can be. Also asking the teacher how long they expected an assignment to take works as well.

- **REMEMBER THE POWER OF PRAISE.** Show you love for your child's accomplishments.
- **DO A WEEKLY CLEAN SWEEP** of student's binder, backpack or locker.
- **RESPECT YOUR CHILD'S "SATURATION POINT."** If he's too tired, stressed, or frustrated to finish his homework, let him stop. Write a note to the teacher explaining the situation, and if it happens every night talk to the teacher about reducing the homework load.
- **LEARN WHEN TO STOP DOING IT FOR THEM:** Get them started, put the routine in place but let them do the work, build their confidence, and reap the rewards, and sometimes failure is part of the learning process.



Once you have helped your child develop a routine based on choice and praise, the challenges will become less daunting and your child will become more confident.

For more information please visit
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