

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Guiding Students for School Success

Medford Township Public Schools
Elementary School Counselors

Put homework success on your child's daily schedule

Many families believe the purpose of homework is to reinforce what is learned at school. But teachers often assign homework for another reason: self-discipline. It's good for kids to practice planning, organizing and being responsible. To help your child make the most of her homework time, remember that:

- **Study time should match your child's abilities.** Factor in about 10 minutes per grade. (Ten minutes for first grade, 20 minutes for second grade, 30 minutes for third grade, etc.) If your child is working longer than this, talk with the teacher about it.
- **Routines make cooperation easier.** For example, your child should study in the same place—and at the same time—every day. With your child's help, choose an area that has no distractions and stock it with basic supplies. If possible, include a calendar for planning. Pick a study time when your child will be able to concentrate best.
- **Communication helps kids.** Talk with your child about assignments. Do they make sense? How long will they take? What supplies are needed? Should parents help? Make a homework sheet of the day's plan.



Source: Peg Dawson, Ed.D., "Homework: A Guide for Parents," National Association of School Psychologists, www.nasponline.org/resources/home_school/homework.aspx.

Be careful about saying 'maybe'

Have you ever needed to say "no" to your child, but said "maybe" instead—just so he wouldn't complain? ("Can we buy that toy?" "Maybe.")



You're not alone. But this can create even bigger problems later. ("You said we were getting it! I heard you!") In the long run, an honest "no" may hurt less than a hope-raising "maybe."

Source: Ruth A. Peters, Ph.D., "Best bets for breaking bad discipline habits," TODAY, www.msnbc.msn.com/id/13753442.

Trying to avoid meltdowns over winter break?



Be realistic about how many holiday events your child can attend. And before heading out the door to any holiday get-together, make sure your child:

- **Has had a snack.**
- **Is well rested.**
- **Knows what to expect—and what's expected of her.**

Healthy bodies = healthy attitudes

Exercise won't just benefit your child's body. It may boost her attitude, too. Research shows that physically fit kids:

- **Are better able to handle stress.**
- **Have a sunnier outlook.**

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends that school-age kids get at least an hour of exercise each day. To make it a family affair, join your child for some playful, heart-pumping fun. Good activities to try include:

- **Soccer.**
- **Skating.**
- **Walking.**



Source: Mary L. Gavin, M.D., "Kids and Exercise," KidsHealth, www.kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/fitness/exercise.html.

TV violence can lead to real-life hurt

Think TV violence has no effect on your child? Think again. Studies show that the more violent programs a child watches, the more aggressive he may become. Too much TV violence may also lead to:

- **Disturbed sleep.**
- **Nightmares.**
- **Increased anxiety.**
- **Antisocial behavior.**



So pay attention to what your child is watching. Is it violent or bloody? Hit the "off" switch!

Source: "Have Toy, See Movie? Not This One," Common Sense Media, www.common SenseMedia.org/parent_tips/commonsense_view/index.php?id=246&cutm_source=newsletter&cutm_medium=weekly&cutm_campaign=203&cutm_content=article_2.

Set an example of anger management

Feeling angry? That's okay! Anger is a normal feeling—and it's important to show your child how to handle it. For example:

- *Take time to calm down* when needed.
- *Be willing to discuss* anger.
- *Express anger in ways* that do not hurt others.
- *Use respectful words* to show anger.
- *Be a good listener* when others are angry.
- *Apologize for poorly expressed* anger.
- *Find positive ways* to vent anger, such as by writing in a journal or taking a short walk.
- *Look for humor* in frustrating situations you can't control.



Source: "Helping Your Child With Anger," Lincoln [Nebraska] Board of Education, http://bin.lps.org/manila/socialwork/Helping_Child_with_Anger.pdf.

Questions & Answers

Q: My fifth grader and I have a terrible time when it comes to making decisions. Whether it's choosing an outfit for school or a board game to play, she always waffles—and we end up arguing. What can I do?

A: Help her learn how to make choices—and how to live with them once she does. By helping your daughter become a stronger decision-maker, you'll be teaching her self-discipline. (After all, it takes self-discipline to make—and stick to—decisions.) Here's what to do:

- *Don't give hollow choices.* If you say to your child, "Either choose an outfit right now or we'll have to miss the birthday party," you'd better be willing to actually miss it. If not, the "choice" you've offered isn't a choice at all. It's an empty threat.
- *Enable her to make wise decisions.* Invite your daughter to make choices, but be sure her options are equally healthy. If you fill the fridge with fruit, yogurt and low-fat cheese, for example, her choice of a snack is likely to be a smart one.
- *Never give limitless options.* Since your child struggles with decision-making, set limits on the choices she has to make. Give her boundaries. Asking, "Would you like to play catch or ride bikes after you finish your homework?" may seem less scary to her than, "What do you want to do tonight?"
- *Know when to stop.* Once your child makes a decision, stop offering choices. Be grateful when she picks the purple socks—don't mention the green, yellow or blue ones again.



Source: "Teach Your Child How to Make Choices," Family Education Network, <http://life.familyeducation.com/parenting/decision-making/45285.html?detoured=1>.

Set expectations that are reasonable

It's vital to set expectations for your child, but be sure they're realistic. For example, is your fourth grader more of a math whiz than an ace reader? Then don't expect him to be as good with fables as he is with fractions.



Instead, encourage him to study hard in every subject. And if he excels in one more than another? Applaud his efforts—and not just his achievements.

Source: Patricia Sullivan, "Great Expectations: What's the Best Way for Parents to Help Children Be Their Best," PTA.org, www.pta.org/archive_article_details_1118085001546.html.

Don't take a vacation from routines!

Resist the urge to scrap all your routines over winter break. The more you stick to a tried-and-true schedule, the better your child may behave during the holidays.

Whenever possible:

- *Enforce* a regular bedtime.
- *Offer* well-balanced meals.
- *Carve out* daily quiet time for your child.

True, with a family calendar full of holiday events, you may need to modify your routines a bit. But stay with as many as possible and you'll likely have a happier and better-behaved child!

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