

Homework Tips – by Dr. Michele Borba

"Homework time" in many families can be very stressful and tension-filled for both child and parent. Research clearly says doing homework enhances not only children's learning but also essential skills they will need to succeed in school and in life such as organization, problem solving, attention span, memory, goal-setting and "stick-to-it-ness" Here's just a few tips to make homework time more successful for your child and you.

- Recognize your role is helper not doer. Sometimes in our quest to help our kids succeed, we may get carried away providing too much help. Make sure he's doing the work--not you! One of the best self-esteem enhancers is recognizing we've done a job we can be proud of. Offering too much help robs your child of those powerful, "I did it!" moments, and he just may be saying to himself instead, "Mom did it for me."
- Do praise his efforts and not just the "end product." Kids need to learn the importance of hard work and effort and homework provides a great opportunity for you to reinforce his perseverance. You might start a family motto such as "Never Give Up!" or "Don't quit until you succeed" or "In this family, we finish what we start," Perhaps the most important trait doing homework instills in our children is perseverance. And the only way they'll learn to value effort is by our steady emphasis of "it's not good enough just to start; you have to finish."
- Insist homework be her responsibility not yours. Resist the temptation of always sitting next to her and offer your help only when it's really needed. If your child is having difficulties, help her understand the work by making up similar problems and showing her step by step how to do it. Then watch her try to do one on her own. That way you won't be doing all the work for her. Asking her to show you her completed work at the end of each row or section is another way to ensure she's following the directions correctly but not relying on you for every detail.
- Section the assignment in smaller chunks. Chunking assignments into smaller chunks is often helpful for kids who have difficulty sticking to a task, have shorter attention spans, or are overly concerned with making sure "everything's right." Then tell your child to do "one chunk at a time" You can even take a short break after completing each chunk. Gradually you can increase the size of the "work chunks" as your child's confidence increases.
- Consider getting a tutor. If you do find homework battles increasing, you are doing most of your child's work or your child is having a difficult time mastering the subject despite your help, consider hiring a tutor. Ask your teacher or other parents for recommendations including even a high school student. The goal of homework should always be to enhance your child's learning abilities and confidence while at the same time preserving the relationship with your child.
- Agree together upon specific times for doing homework ahead of time and then stick to it. You may want to even post your agreement in a visible place and then sign it. Many kids need a break after school, while others like to delve right in. Find your child's best time work time and consistently reinforce it. Drawing a clock face that shows the set homework time is helpful for younger children.

Michele Borba, Ed.D. is an internationally-recognized consultant on increasing children's self-esteem and achievement and is the author of 24 publications including *Parents Do Make A Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds, and Caring Hearts*. A former classroom teacher and parent of three sons, she has presented keynotes and workshops to over half a million participants worldwide and is a frequent guest on radio and television talk shows.