

## Why is Homework Important – Importance of Homework in Learning Process to Student Success

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Ask any nine-year-old if he or she likes homework, and you're likely to see a vigorously shaking head and hear a resounding and strongly emoted: NO! When the novelty of school wears off after kindergarten, many children become disenchanted with this time-honored, but sometimes annoying mainstay of education.

While there's no surprise that most kids would rather spend their time playing Roblox or riding bikes, what do grown-up experts have to say about the importance of homework in the learning process? You might be surprised to find out that the answer is somewhat complicated.



In recent years, the educational world has been rocked by school districts, parents, teachers, and educational researchers who have been voicing their concerns over the effectiveness of homework. On one hand, many districts around the country have been

moving towards eliminating it altogether at the elementary level. On the other, researchers have shown that the right type of assignment can help students succeed academically and on standardized tests.

School might be out of session for the summer, but in just a couple of months as the fall semester begins, the debate will be heating up all over again as students head back to the classroom. Let's take a closer look at both sides of the debate and come to a more balanced perspective on this growing hot-button educational topic.

## The Great Homework Debate: What's the Issue?

Homework has gotten a bad rap lately. Since the turn of the century, there has been quite a bit of negative talk, especially with the publishing of multiple books that critique its efficacy, like Alfie Kohn's *The Homework Myth: Why Kids Get Too Much of a Bad Thing*. In his book, Kohn states his belief that there is no evidence that it helps elementary students succeed.

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No matter which book or study you read, the main arguments against home-based assignments seem to revolve around the following ideas:

- It encroaches on important family time at home. Parents and researchers alike have noted that homework cuts down on the already limited time that parents have to spend with their children. In America's past, many women stayed home to tend to the kids. But times have certainly changed, with many non-traditional one-parent households, and many nuclear families now consisting of two-parent earners both with jobs outside the home.
- Many homework assignments are checked for completion and not accuracy. Teachers are time-strapped and burdened as state funding gets slashed and class sizes soar. This often means that educators are unable to keep up with a workload that includes individualized feedback on differentiated homework assignments. In turn, this results in educators that simply check it as completed or not, earning students a participation grade instead of receiving much more meaningful feedback.
- Can be seen as "busy work" if it does not relate closely enough to a specific lesson. As a parent, you might have seen this before when working with your kindergartener or 1st grader on a "menu" that includes topics that the children haven't even reviewed in class! In this way, some assignments can be seen as merely "busy work" assigned by the teacher because the campus or district says that a certain number of tasks must be given per week.
- For older kids and teens, it can contribute to sleep deprivation and stress. As students begin to earn a GPA and work towards class rank, school becomes much more

competitive. Even in the older elementary years, too much homework can be seen as a major factor for a student's lack of sleep or their stress related to earning a particular grade.

- Some say it lowers motivation and intrinsic interest in academic subjects. Some parents and experts call homework a “chore” and blame assignments for destroying their child's love for learning. For instance, many rue the forced reading lists or sustained silent reading because kids usually do not respond well to an activity in which they're made to do something without little choice in the matter.

At this point, you might be thinking to yourself, is homework important or not? It's important to note that many educators and researchers do believe in the concept of homework. After all, a debate needs at least two sides! Let's flip the coin to see the other side of the argument.

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## Why is Homework Important?

The case laid out above might seem to seal the deal on the argument, as it does offer valid arguments, but facts and statistics are hard to come by when the educational system varies across the country as much as it does. However, there are many teachable aspects of homework that are often looked over in the rhetoric against the assignments.



Here are 10 reasons why homework is important to student success:

1. Helps build responsibility. Some current buzzwords and phrases in the educational community are all about making students accountable and taking ownership of their learning. Homework helps kids do just that because they learn to take responsibility for their actions. When completed, they get the reward of earning a good grade, but face consequences in learning and in class when leave it by the wayside.
2. Develops work ethic from an early age. Children need to understand the value of hard work and to form the obligation and self-regulation to commit to their projects and see them through. That said, homework can help students form a hardy work ethic that they will take with them to college and beyond.
3. Improves time management. From kindergarten to senior year, kids and teens struggle to manage time and prioritize their to-do list. For young children, parents tend to these assignments to guide kids to develop this important skill. The goal for high school students means eventually learning how to manage multiple tasks to fit it in their schedule, and plan which will take longer or shorter depending on their skill level, strengths, or weaknesses.
4. Gives students confidence. Sometimes kids need to attempt problems or exercises on their own and realize that failure is an important part of the learning process. In

working through math problems or constructing essays, students gain confidence and hone creative problem-solving skills.

5. Enhances self-esteem. Once children gain confidence that they can complete an assignment or perform a skill independently, they build a healthy self-esteem, which is important to many aspects of everyday life.
6. Teaches study habits. Students don't enter kindergarten already knowing how to study. In fact, many kids still struggle with study habits when they enter high school! Consistent homework can help children realize the importance of practice, especially if their teachers provide timely feedback and offer tasks that directly relate to the unit quizzes or tests.
7. Can offer valuable feedback. When used correctly in the classroom, home assignments can result in meaningful classroom discussions or conferences. Teachers can meet one-on-one with students to discuss observations about progress, or use generalized whole-class feedback to offer students tips on how to improve.
8. Gets parents more involved in a child's education. Like it or not, as a parent, homework forces us to stay on the same page with our children as they work through units and lessons. It also allows parents to contact the teacher if they notice their child struggling with any one subject or topic. Especially in the younger grades, at-home work can keep mom and dad informed about their children's strengths and weaknesses, allowing for ample intervention opportunities, if necessary.
9. The link between homework and standardized test achievement. According to some recent studies, there is a modest positive link between students who successfully complete homework and success on state standardized tests. When taken further, it's not hard to believe that students who take their work seriously and value their education naturally perform better on not only state testing, but in classwork as well.
10. Prepares students for professional careers. While most professions don't require workers to take tasks home, there are indeed deadlines in the real world. Home assignments can help children prepare for the real world by teaching them to meet their obligations on time.

## A More Balanced Approach

So how important is homework to student success, and what do kids really need to succeed? Ask most educational theorists, and they probably agree that homework, when given in moderation when and where appropriate, can be a useful tool to help kids learn and grow. The old adage "quality over quantity" applies to any home-based assignment, and timely feedback must be given to assist students learn the desired concept or skill. Students must understand the purpose and realize the relevancy for any assignment, whether done at home or in the classroom.

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