

# Homework Help: Creating a Homework Space



Homework can be a source of frustration and difficulty particularly for students with ADHD. As a parent, you can help lessen that frustration by creating an organized and comfortable space within your home for your child to do homework. This might be a kitchen table, desk, or even a floor mat. The best space is one where your child can be near you or another adult but yet have minimal distractions.

With a designated homework space, your child can get into the homework habit each time they sit down to do their homework. Your child begins to associate that space with being focused and productive and learns how to organize and structure his or her time and thoughts.

The following tips can help you set up the space:

- ❖ Involve your child in setting up the space to help figure out what works best for him or her early in the school year.
- ❖ Make sure your child has all the necessary materials to do his or her homework (paper, binders, calculator, rulers, pencils, pens, and erasers) and, if possible, an extra set of school books for home.
- ❖ Color-coded folders or ones with different patterns are very helpful in reminding your child what goes where. Some students find it helpful to have a folder for completed homework



**National  
Resource  
Center  
on ADHD**  
A Program of CHADD

assignments that travels back and forth to home and school.

- ❖ A portable homework station like a basket with supplies can help when your child prefers to study on a floor mat, a sofa, or at a table near you.
- ❖ Remove or minimize things that distract or cause stress, such as facing away from the doors and windows or removing the television.
- ❖ Keep pets in another room.
- ❖ If possible find an open space or accessible room with good lighting. Although some kids like to do their homework on the floor, having an uncluttered table or desk available is a good idea.
- ❖ Pick the space so that you can keep an eye on your child but do not hover over your child.
- ❖ Provide a timer or a silent clock to help your child know the difference between work time and break time.

- ❖ Your child may work better with predictable background noise or music without words than complete silence. Try it out with your child to see what works.
- ❖ Some children work better if they are able to stand or move around/walk while doing activities such as reading, memorizing, or being quizzed. Try it out with your child to see what works.
- ❖ Check in throughout the year to see what's working for your child and if the space needs to be adjusted to help your child work better.

## Additional Homework Tips:

- ❖ Get your child a planner to record daily homework assignments and reminders.



- ❖ Show your child how to file loose papers into specific folders (for example: math, reading, parent signatures, science, completed homework, and incomplete assignments).
- ❖ Involve your child in setting up ways to organize their belongings, including the book bag, folders, binder, and assignments so they can keep track daily of their school work on their own.
- ❖ Establish a designated homework time for each day (consistency is key!).
- ❖ For younger children and older students who need extra help organizing, help them by going through their assignments with them. Show

them how to read all the directions carefully.

- ✓ Use colored pens or highlighters to highlight the main parts, questions, and instructions. Highlighters, colored pens, and sticky notes can also be used by the student to double check their own work.
- ✓ Have your child re-read the assignments for better understanding.
- ✓ Write important information down so your child can reference it again.
- ❖ Work with your child to organize homework assignments into manageable parts:
  - ✓ Divide big assignments into smaller ones.
  - ✓ Use a calendar to help plan for larger assignments; this helps model how to plan and breakdown larger assignments.
  - ✓ Work on one section at a time.
- ❖ If your child has difficulty with handwriting, using drafts or dictating ideas and then writing them down from the dictation can help. Your child can break down parts or directions by thinking of ideas and recording them, then listening to the recording to organize before writing everything in order.
- ❖ Use a timer to manage attention.
  - ✓ Schedule 5–10 minute breaks to allow time for your child to move around and grab a healthy snack and drink to energize.
  - ✓ Work with your child to see when and how often breaks are needed.
- ❖ Check homework with your child.

- ❖ Praise your child for effort and be specific in your praise:
  - ✓ Give positive feedback to show you are noticing his or her effort and perseverance.
  - ✓ Remain optimistic, patient, and hopeful. Take a break yourself if you need it.
  - ✓ Reward your child's effort to continue trying his or her best with specific and concrete praise.
- ❖ Continue to monitor your child's work and study skills and habits to find out what's working or not working and adjust accordingly.
- ❖ Communicate with your child's teacher if you notice any patterns or things that work or that are challenging for your child during homework time.



## Praise Your Child

Instead of saying “good job,” say “I like how you kept trying even when the math problems became harder.”

and

Replace “you are doing great!” with something more concrete so they know what they are doing well, such as, “You went back to re-read the question to check your work; that extra step was a great idea.”

## References

- Dolin, A. (2010). *Homework Made Simple: Tips, Tools, and Solutions for Stress Free Homework*. Advantage Books: Washington, DC.
- Low, K. (2014). *Homework Help for Students with ADHD*. About Health.
- Segal, J. & Smith, M. (2016). *ADD/ADHD and School*. HelpGuide.org.
- Zentall, S.S. & Goldstein, S. (1999). *Seven Steps to Homework Success*. Specialty Press, Inc.: Plantation, Florida.

For further information, please contact:  
 National Resource Center on ADHD:  
 A Program of CHADD  
 4601 Presidents Drive, Suite 300  
 Lanham, MD 20706-4832  
 1-800-233-4050  
[www.chadd.org/nrc](http://www.chadd.org/nrc)



© 2016 Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/  
 Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD). All Rights Reserved.