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Fast Fixes to Get Homework Done

Shorten the afternoon slog! These homework tips will get assignments done fast for a stress-free evening at home.

by [Sarah Amberson](#), [Brandi Barnes](#), [Gina Whiting](#)

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Homework problems lead to many kids with ADHD failing in school. Almost every parent of a student with ADHD has been [on the front lines of homework battles](#), but homework doesn't have to be exhaustive to be effective. The National Education Association and the Parent Teacher Association recommend 10 minutes per subject per day. In other words, a sixth grader should spend roughly 60 minutes per evening on homework. If teachers are piling it on, have a friendly discussion with them. The following strategies can shorten completion time and reduce stress at home.

Tools for Teachers

>One size doesn't fit all. Data from assessments (formal and informal), daily observations, and anecdotal notes from the previous week should be used to determine homework assignments. Before assigning the entire class the same math practice page or reading passage, classroom teachers should consider, "What does each child need some extra practice with?" Individualizing

homework increases the odds that a child will complete it.

>Factor in students' [learning styles](#). Be creative and give students a "menu of options" for homework. Options for learning weekly vocabulary words might be to write a rap song or create a PowerPoint using the words. Students will be more enthusiastic about the homework process if they are given choices.

>Have a [study buddy](#) (or two). Assign willing students to be the go-to person to answer questions from a student with ADHD who doesn't understand the homework assignment.

>Be responsive to parents who report frustration over homework. Be willing to [adjust homework assignments](#), so that students with ADHD and LD spend a reasonable, not an excessive, amount of time doing them each evening. Does completing 50 subtraction

Give students a menu of homework options. For vocabulary words, they can write a rap song or create a PowerPoint using the words.



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problems really help a child learn? Wouldn't 10 or 15 math problems provide enough practice and give you enough feedback? Try to shorten and reduce the workload -- particularly the amount of writing required.

>**Post assignments on the board.** Write the homework assignment in the same place on the board each day.

>**Have students [use an assignment calendar](#)** or agenda -- then guide and monitor the recording of assignments.

>**Collect homework and give some feedback.** It is frustrating to students and parents to spend a lot of time on assignments that the teacher never looks at.

>**Don't assign homework as a punishment** or a consequence for misbehavior at school. Don't send home [unfinished classwork](#) to do as homework. Instead, provide the necessary modifications and supports, so that in-school work is in-school work, and homework is homework.

>**Provide a variety of ways for a student to get homework assignments.** Record assignments on a classroom answering machine or school voicemail, as well as on the teacher's Web page. Another option: Post homework assignments on an outside window of the classroom, so students can return to check it after school.

>**Provide incentives for turning in homework.** Let your students play Homeworkopoly (download the game board and "Chance" cards at [teachnet.com](#)). Every day, students who have turned in their completed homework get to roll a die and move their individual marker that number of spaces along the game board, which looks like a Monopoly board. Along the way, they may land on special squares, earning small prizes or privileges.

>**Have students chart their progress.** Ask students to graph their own homework completion and return rates. >**Check assignment calendars and planners**, since students with ADHD often make careless recording errors, entering assignments on the wrong date. Routinely ask table partners or groups seated together to check each other's assignment pads.

>**Are the parents in the know?** Invite parents to observe lessons in your classroom, so they will have a better understanding of how to work with their child. Don't assume that parents will know what to do or how to help their child complete the assigned tasks. Demonstrate ways for the parent to help her child. [Parents are a key factor](#) in student success, and teachers must take the initiative to educate them.

Pointers for Parents

>**Be there.** Sit with your child and talk through what needs to be done. Once she starts to work, you may fold laundry, knit, or read in the same room. At some point, she may ask you to leave. If so, go.

>**Get him moving.** Physical activity -- walking on a treadmill or fiddling with pipe cleaners -- [increases alertness for mental activity](#). Encourage your student to walk around the house reading aloud from a book. Chances are, she will soon settle down and be able to focus on her work.

>**Use medication.** By the time they get home from school, most kids with ADHD are tired and their medication is wearing off -- a double whammy for doing homework. Talk with your doctor about prescribing a short-acting medication. When [medication is working](#), students stay focused and complete homework more quickly. They also tend to remember the material they studied.

>**Set the stage.** It's the end of the day and everyone in the household is tired, but you still have to do homework. Make your child feel comfortable as he starts his homework. Have him wear comfortable clothes and make the sure the environment doesn't distract him. Some kids need a quiet room with no distractions, while others may need a little background noise.

>**Make it fun.** Writing definitions for 25 vocabulary words is boring. [Turn it into a game!](#) Post words and definitions around the house for them to match. Have them jump on the trampoline while learning multiplication facts. Talk with their teacher about ways to make homework active.

>**Avoid interruptions.** Once the student begins homework, hold his telephone calls until break time or until homework is completed. You may have to take a cell phone away to keep him from texting.

>**Spice things up.** If a homework assignment is boring, [play music](#) or TV at low volume.

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When reading, break assignments into segments marked by colored paper clips. When the student reads as far as the clip, he can take a break.

>**Skip missing information.** Students with ADHD often look for excuses to stop doing their homework. So if he needs information to answer a question, have him work around it, leaving a blank that can be filled in later that night or the next day.

>**Take a break when no homework has been assigned.** Don't require your child to study on those days. Use the time to [have fun with your child](#). You will deepen family relationships and build his self-esteem.

>**Find a tutor.** If you find it hard to help your child with schoolwork, [find someone who can](#). A junior or senior high school student may be ideal -- and the right price -- depending on the need and age of your child.

>**Put completed homework into the appropriate folder.** See that completed work is placed in the designated folder and is put into the backpack the night before. To keep him from losing it before class, [set up a system](#) with the teacher to collect the work upon arriving at school.

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This article appears in the Fall 2012 issue of *ADDitude*.



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