

Homework ("Learning at Home")

Does homework help or hinder student learning? This is very much dependent on how at-home learning is approached and what the at-home learning entails. Teacher-assigned worksheets (old-style homework) are typically not assigned anymore - instead, parents/guardians are encouraged to extend classroom learning at home through meaningful and authentic "real-life" application and experiences.

Homework is for the following purposes:

- Reviewing/applying previously taught and learned material in "real life" contexts
- Extension of concepts learned (e.g., inquiring into areas of interest and doing research to find answers to wonderings)
- Building fluency and recall (e.g., reading "at-level" books and enjoying shared-reading daily; playing games or doing tasks/activities that allow for the practice of math facts and concepts)
- Applying learned skills (e.g., following a recipe to apply the learning of units of measurement)

Homework is valuable if it:

- Successfully extends student learning in a manner in which they are genuinely engaged (students pursuing areas of interest, active learning/investigating, pursuing student-generated inquiry questions; self-directed research with the guidance and support of an adult)
- Builds, for the child, positive attitudes and a growth mindset, and habits for life-long learning
- Allows for appropriate parent involvement (modeling, guiding, coaching, encouraging)
- Reinforces the learning of skills and concepts already taught and practiced in class
- Is engaging and realistic in terms of quantity and difficulty (appropriate level of difficulty and meaningful content so the child willingly engages).

Suggestions and examples of "homework":

Instead of calling it "homework time", which can be associated with work refusal or conflict, set time aside daily for "Brain Exercise" or just call it "Family Time".

The purpose is to build into each day a time when learning is purposeful and focused.

Developing CONCEPTUAL understanding and encouraging an INQUIRY mindset is the focus of education today, and as such should be the focus at home. Here are some suggested activities/tasks for at-home learning:

- Playing board games or card games that involve use of strategy, turn-taking, cooperation, problem-solving, and/or number sense (e.g., math operations, counting, patterning).
- Learning to play an instrument
- Taking a walk in a nature area/trail/beach and talk about/examine what you see, smell, hear, touch.
- Engaging in drama games (builds communication skills, confidence in speaking in front of an audience)
- Cooking (following a recipe, measuring ingredients)
- Learning how to knit/crochet/sew
- Building things out of “found” objects
- Crafts (e.g., patterning can be practiced by making bracelets with beads)
- Reading (independently and shared reading - from a variety of genres)
 - Surround your child with literature they can enjoy and learn from - visit the local library weekly to provide a selection of reading materials
 - Work with your child to find answers to their “How” and “Why” questions - take these opportunities to model how to select trusted sources of information (critical literacy skills)
- Writing shopping lists, letters to relatives (“real-life” writing)
- Writing in a personal journal/making books
 - These should be “free write” experiences where the child is not required to correct things like spelling/punctuation. Adults can model correct usage by co-writing books with their child.

*If a child is using technology (iPad, computer/phone) be sure to have parental controls activated and be supervising your child during their time on a device - have children on a device in the same room as you and have them positioned so you can see the screen.

Reminders about Internet Use:

Surfing the Internet, chatting to friends on-line through messaging, and using other social media platforms can be fun for young people but there is a growing trend where these experiences can lead to exposure to inappropriate content, falling victim to bullying and unpleasant or possibly dangerous exchanges or encounters, video-game addiction, and over-doing the amount of screen time. Below are some guidelines:

Managing the Internet at Home:

- Limit screen time

The Canadian Paediatric Society recommends:

- **For children under two years old** screen time is not recommended.
- **For children two to five years old** limit recreational screen time to less than one hour a day.
- **For children older than five** limit recreational screen time to less than two hours a day.

[Screen use and young children | Caring for kids](#)

- Learn about what your kids do online (who they are speaking with, what games they are playing, what social media platforms they are using)
- Create a family agreement on Internet use
- Have children use devices in your presence; monitor their use
- Teach your children never to give out personal information
- Encourage good "Netiquette"
- Set parental controls - ensure content viewed and games played are appropriate for the age of your child
- Encourage an open dialogue with kids regarding Internet conduct (discuss "cyber bullying")
- Keep devices out of bedrooms, especially at night

Visit Media Smarts for more tips in managing screen time, access to content and games, and ways to keep children safe while online:

<http://mediasmarts.ca>

Other recommended sites for parents:

- <https://www.netismartzkids.org/aboutus/>
- <https://www.netismartzkids.org/> (for kids)
- <https://www.kidsintheknow.ca/app/en/parents>