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Top Ten Homework Tips for Parents of Children with Learning Disabilities

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After a long day of school, homework time can be difficult for all children. It can be especially difficult for those children with learning disabilities. Children with learning disabilities (LD) have more difficulty completing homework due to the following reasons: difficulty with organization (e.g., forgetting to bring home books, which homework pages to complete), higher frustration levels and often, attentional issues.

Thankfully, there are things parents can do to assist their child with a learning disability to complete their homework!



The Environment

Location: Your child should complete his/her homework in the same location every night. *Hint: Have your child assist you in choosing the location.* Also, make sure your child's homework space has plenty of lighting. His/her desk and chair should be the appropriate size.



Did you know that having a desk and chair that is the correct size can improve attention and fine motor skills while decreasing fidgeting and distractions?



- Feet should be able to rest firmly on the floor.
- Desk/table height should be no higher than 1-2" above the child's belly button.
- Writing or reading on a slant board can help decrease glare and fatigue.

Supplies: At the beginning of each school year, assist your child in making a homework supply kit with all the necessary school supplies. Purchase a calendar with large spaces to write in assignments and due dates. Starting to use a calendar early on will assist your child through his/her school career. Older children can use a personal planner.



Routines & Goals: Be consistent! Homework should be done at the same time every day. Decide which adult is going to assist. Establish rules for reducing distractions (no friends over, no phone calls during homework time, no music or TV). If possible, allow active play time between school and homework time to allow kids to regulate their energy and attention.



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Encouragement/Motivation

Praise: Provide frequent verbal (“Wow! You’re working so hard on these multiplication problems!”) and non-verbal praise (hugs, pats on the back). Focus on the child’s attempts and persistence rather than inherent skills (e.g., “You are working so hard on learning this skill,” instead of “You are so smart.”)



Monitoring Time on Task: Using a timer or an hourglass will make the passage of time more concrete. Your child can actually see the amount of time that is passing and how much time he/she has left to work. This strategy may not work for students who will focus only on the time remaining.



Keep it Fun: Try to find engaging ways to work on new skills. Model behaviors like reading for fun and work time into each day to do so. Create games, make up songs, and incorporate active movement into study sessions.



Strategies

Organization: It is important to teach your child a strategy to pack his/her book bag at the end of each school day. *Hint: Write a simple list of books/supplies needed for homework on an index card & keep it in the front pocket of the book bag.* Other strategies for organization include using different colored folders and notebooks for each subject and having your child pack up his/her book bag every night instead of waiting until the morning.



Mnemonic Phrases: Students often learn better when they are able to attach abstract concepts to mnemonic phrases or catchy music.



Fatigue: In order to prevent fatigue when completing homework, provide frequent short movement breaks.



Chunking: Break assignments into shorter tasks. *Hint: Do not wait until Thursday night to start studying for Friday’s test! Start Monday and study for 10 minutes each night.*



Resources:

Richards, Regina G., Tool Kit for Parents: Being an Efficient Homework Helper, 2004. (www.idonline.org)

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