

# Getting Kids to do Their Homework?



## 7 Things to do to Get Your Kids to do Their Homework

From the Authors of [The Listening Space: A Guide to Strengthening Parent-Child Relationships with Motivational Parenting](#)

# The Conversation

Using the methods below can make a big difference in having effective conversations when it comes to homework.

## ***End the Fighting over homework.***

**Parent:** “Remember to get your homework done before you get on electronics.”

**Child:** “Yup, I will.”

One hour later...

**Parent:** “Is your homework done?”

**Child:** “Yes. I was able to complete it all a little bit ago.”

Or...

**Child:** “Oh no, I forgot.”

**Parent:** “You need to go work on it now, and let me know when you are done.”

**Child:** “Ok, I’ll get on it now.”

In these moments,

**It matters what we say.**

**It matters how we engage.**

Let’s look at the **7 things that can make this conversation a reality.**



## **1. Foundational Structure and Systems**

One of the key elements in having conversations that go well when dealing with homework is to have a good system and structure. Will they be doing their homework right after school? Will they be doing the homework right after dinner? Will it be that they have to do it when you get home from work? Will it be before they can have any electronics? Are they supposed to do the homework at the kitchen table or in the front room? What about talking to friends? Putting something into place is going to be important for the child to set them up for success so they can follow the pattern, they know what is expected of them.



## **2. Explore and be Curious First**

When a child says, “I don’t want to do my homework.” Try to explore and be curious about what is going on with them instead of coming down on them and forcing them. Are they finding it difficult? Are they just really wanting to get to the fun things that they love to do? Do they feel hopeless? Do they just hate homework? Have they just developed a routine of their own to immediately try to fight with you when it comes to talking about homework? This is important information in order to have a healthy conversation with your child. The more you can learn their perspective, the more successful the conversation can go.



### **3. Empathize**

Now that you've learned the child's perspective, the next tool is critical to having success. Empathizing with your child. If your child feels you can empathize with them, they are more likely to work with you than fight you. Sometimes parents have a hard time applying this skill because they believe if they have empathy they convey to the child that they agree with them. However, empathy doesn't convey that at all. When empathy is applied it allows the child to feel like you are on their team causing the child to feel a little more confident to take on life's challenges. How do you utilize empathy? Find what is at the core of what they are saying to you. Is it that they really want to just go and do fun things? Can you empathize? Have you ever had moments where you didn't want to work and instead go golfing, shopping, hanging out with friends, going on vacation, etc.? Once you empathize, repeat back what you empathize with. "It sounds like you really want to get to your fun things. They are more fun than homework." Again, this puts you in a place to work with them versus against them.



### **4. Intentions and Friendly Reminders are a Good Thing**

Normally children aren't necessarily trying to do something bad or mean. It's extremely easy to get distracted with more fun things compared to things that aren't fun. If one or two friendly reminders are all it takes to get

the child to do their homework, then wonderful. Far better to have a reminder versus a fight. We aren't suggesting that you continuously give reminders, but a reminder or two can be very helpful for the child to get on course. If you have to get to a third reminder, you can use the next tool below and give an option. It's important to be patient when a child's intentions aren't negative to be patient and try to work with the child versus immediately turning to anger and punishment. Most if not all adults need reminders, so it's only human to need reminders as a child.



## **5. Create Options**

Options are an important piece to moving things successfully forward, and over time it becomes less and less used as the child becomes used to the systems and structures you put in place. Giving children options, even if they are a very limited number, gives the child a feeling of autonomy and the ability to choose. "You can choose to do your homework now, or after you get your chores done." If there is flexibility with their time for chores it could be, "You can do your homework before dinner or after dinner when I can help you." Maybe it's an option with what they want to do, "You can play with your friends now for 15 minutes, and then do your homework, or you can do your homework and play with your friends for the rest of the evening after your homework is done." Either way, finding options can go a long way in the child not feeling cornered.



## **6. Utilize Lightheartedness**

Lightheartedness and humor can make a world of difference. If there is some way to make a game of the homework like seeing how many they can do in a minute. Maybe it's reading the questions in a funny voice. Maybe it's applying some funny joke. Maybe it's some way of mocking yourself in getting them to do their

homework. Maybe it's some tickling or a fun treat. Either way, lightheartedness, and humor can blow the frustration and tension right out of the room.



## 7. Support and Help Where Needed

If the child is struggling, feeling overwhelmed, not getting their homework, etc., then it's important to be there to be a help and support. If they are really overwhelmed, it might take a little bit before they can focus. You might need to find a way to break the homework down to bite size pieces and help them focus on one thing at a time. You might have to help them discover how to look up more information on how to do something, like an algebra problem. If support and help are needed, pay attention to what is truly needed from the child as it may change between each child and between each assignment.

**If this was helpful, watch for our next document on the 5 tools to help stop fights around electronics.**

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