

## Tackling Homework & Helping children to Study for Exams

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When I discuss their child's difficulties with parents, if I ask how their child gets on with their homework; the parents put their head in their hands and groan!

Homework can be an extremely frustrating and upsetting time for the child, the parents and the rest of the family. The following is advice to support you:

### Homework can be a Problem for Students with learning Difficulties because:

- They are often extremely tired when they get home from school
- They haven't copied the homework instructions correctly or the Homework has been dictated by the teacher and they haven't been able to record it and therefore don't understand what the homework is
- They understand what the homework is but they don't understand what to do
- They can be disorganised and therefore don't bring the required materials or books home with them
- They have poor study skills
- They have poor time management skills
- They have poor memory or processing skills



**Everything can be confused and overloaded and your child is tired and then they give up**

### To support your child, you require the following information:

- **How long should the homework take?**

It often takes much longer for a child with LD to complete homework tasks. This is unfair and should be communicated to the teacher so that he/she can modify the tasks or reduce the load

➤ **When was the work set and when is it due in?**

Make sure that you know this and then put this on a timetable/planner that is visible to your child. Then work out with them when (day and time) each piece of homework will be tackled. You can also help them to put this onto their iPhone or iPad so that they get reminders when an assignment should be 50% and then 75% completed etc.

➤ **The purpose of the homework?**

Is it for a test, an assignment/project relating to class work, to consolidate something that has been taught or to finish work that has begun in class? If it is the latter and your child seems to be bringing a lot of work home to finish, it is important to talk to the teacher about this as it may be that the expectations are too great or the form of response (e.g. free writing) is not the right one for them.

- **If the homework is study for exams;** ask the teacher what your child needs to revise, sometimes a child can spend a long time studying topics they don't require



**Routines are Important**

**To minimise trauma of nightly homework; a routine is essential.**

- Negotiate what works best for your child
- You must be firm and in negotiating and with your child sticking to the agreement
- Decide with your child when the homework will be done and where homework will be done. Both are important, find a quiet place away from distractions

**When your child gets home from school:**

- Give him something to eat (children with LD normally perform best by eating every three hours) and let them unwind for a while by watching TV or playing ball outside, reading a magazine or book.
- Following extra curricula clubs are to be encouraged however, think carefully about how many clubs and how many sessions they will attend. You child won't want to complete their homework after they come back from 6 nights a week of gymnastics, football, basketball, dance etc.

## How much help should you give?



We want to help our child and often they find the homework difficult to complete independently. Firstly, if we can see that it is too difficult or that your child could complete it much faster if they could use a word processor, talk to the teacher and try and negotiate a better outcome. Ask if your child can draw a flowchart as opposed to writing a science report, use a computer as opposed to free hand, plan their project on a Mindmaps, dictate for you to scribe etc.

## Suggestions for Tackling Homework and Exam Study with your child

- Find a quiet place to work
- Make sure that the desk or table is as clear of items as it can be
- Have the planner on the wall or somewhere visible for your child to see
- Make sure that they have all the resources they might need such as paper, pens, eraser, and sharpener. So that they don't have to keep getting up to collect the equipment
- Help them to organise their projects or subject content by buying coloured subject dividers. Put a small colour strip on the spine of their exercise books so that they can retrieve them quickly when packing and unpacking their bag. For example: a yellow strip could mean English, a blue means Maths
- Find a comfortable chair and think about lighting, heating and cooling.
- Sometimes a timer helps to keep them on task and for them to see how much time is left before they can finish!
- Use simple language when offering explanations
- Ask the school to send information via email if possible, that way your child can use text to speech software to have information read to him. If this is not possible be prepared to read some or all the information to your child
- If there are documentaries or DVDs about the subject or the book being read in class, encourage your child to watch them, as visualising may help
- Help your child to think of the best way to tackle certain types of homework. E.g. for a project should they Mindmaps ideas and everything they know about the subject first

- Help them find the best websites for research. There are websites available which will tell you the overall reading age of a website so that your child isn't reading at frustration level.
- For revision: encourage Mindmaps, encourage your child to read aloud or to retain what they have learned by teaching you the subject or imagining they are talking to a class. Encourage them to highlight key words/dates to help them visualise and remember.
- Encourage your child to tackle the hardest homework first and help him to prioritise homework
- As stated, negotiate with the school the best way for your child to demonstrate their knowledge e.g. Use of a computer to present homework often makes a positive difference to results in secondary school. Then help them to respond according to their strengths: drawing, computers, design, music etc.

### **Homework Club**

Encourage your child to try a school-based homework club if they are offering one.

### **The Following is information may help Secondary School Students to when Studying:**

#### **Proof Reading**

1. When you are proof reading an assignment or email read it forwards to check for content, grammar and punctuation and then read it backwards to check each word for spelling.
2. To improve your grammar; read the piece aloud to make sure it makes sense, for example, when you take a short pause is there a comma?
3. Editing: The following suggestions will help.
  - a) A well-constructed paragraph consists of a topic sentence, supporting sentence and a concluding sentence.
  - b) Every sentence must be clearly related to the main idea and must support the main idea. The concluding sentence summarises the important points briefly and signals the end of the paragraph.
  - c) When editing, check that each paragraph fulfils the following criteria:
    - Does the paragraph have one main idea?

- Is the main idea properly explained and substantiated with supporting details and examples?
- Are all the sentences in the paragraph relevant to the main idea?
- Are all the points within the paragraph made in a logical order, to develop the main idea?
- Do the paragraphs flow in logically?

#### 4. Editing for Expression

- Are the sentences complete, do they make sense?
- Is there variety in sentence construction?
- Is the composition well-paced, with the argument moving at the right speed?
- Check punctuation
- Check spelling
- Avoid using too many long sentences
- Cut out all unnecessary words
- Check vocabulary choices for accuracy and appropriateness

#### **Essay Checklist**

1. Have you used the official title (as set)?
2. Does your essay answer the actual question set? Keep referring back and See KEY WORDS below
3. Does the essay have a clear structure?
4. Does the introduction inform the reader what is to come?
5. Are your main points/arguments supported by evidence?
6. Have you distinguished between your own ideas and those taken from other authors?
7. Have you acknowledged the sources for other authors? For example, in the text give author and date the book was published directly after the quote. (Thompson 1994). In the bibliography give a full reference: Thompson P (1994) Reading - A Voyage of Discovery, New York Free Press.
8. Have you included a bibliography?
9. Is the length correct? (check specification)
10. Have you checked through your work for errors of spelling and punctuation?

11. It is hard to proofread within a day of finishing the work. Read aloud to check for omitted words and clarity in general. Read backwards to check for spellings
12. Does your work follow the structure set out in departmental guidelines?

#### Key Words

- Discuss... Give advantages and disadvantages, present different views
- Identify... Spot the relevant information
- Consider... Take various factors, issues into account, weigh up the merits of different ideas
- Analyse... Make value judgements