

# STEPS TO Homework Success



When your children do homework, they reinforce what they learned at school and expand their knowledge. But they learn more than the information in their assignments—they also build study skills and habits that they'll need throughout school and life.

Here are ways you can provide support and help your youngsters succeed with their homework.

## BEFORE

### Create a study area

Many children work best in a special study area, such as at a bedroom desk or the kitchen table. However, some youngsters do better sprawling on the living room floor or sitting on their bed. Consider letting your child decide where he'll work—he's more likely to stay on task when he's comfortable. Regardless, his work area should have adequate lighting and homework supplies, such as pens, pencils, paper, a ruler, a calculator, and a dictionary.

### Get assignments

Remind your youngster that it's her job to write down assignments in school. She may need to copy them from the board or write them in her agenda as her teacher talks. When she gets home, check that she has the instructions and handouts she needs—you'll help her get in the habit of bringing home her assignments the day they're given.



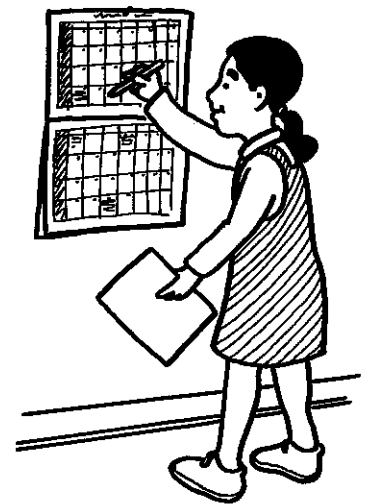
### Make a daily plan

Glance over your child's homework, and help him come up with a study plan. You might suggest that he tackle tougher or

longer assignments first while he's fresh and alert. He should be able to follow most homework instructions without supervision, but let him know you're available to discuss them.

### Break projects into steps

Encourage your youngster to use a calendar to stay on schedule as she works on a project. Have her divide each project into steps and write them on the calendar. A science project, for example, might include steps like: develop hypothesis, conduct experiment, record results, write lab report. *Tip:* She may need your help breaking assignments into chunks and choosing deadlines.



### Team with teachers

Ask your child's teacher about homework rules and how she would like you to help (or not help) him. Find out what kinds of assignments your youngster should expect. Provide your phone number and email address, and encourage the teacher to contact you if problems arise. The sooner you are aware of an issue, the more quickly a solution can be found.

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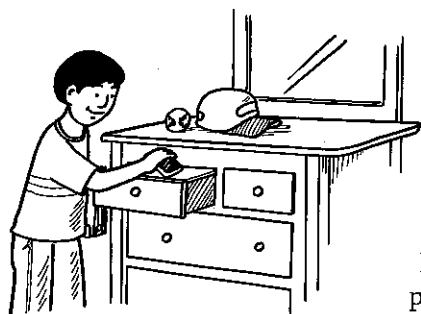
## DURING

### Keep a routine

Starting homework at the same time each day can make learning a habit for your child. Have her try a couple of different times to see what works best. Possibilities include immediately after school, before dinner (but after she has had time to play), or after dinner.

### Increase concentration

Some youngsters need calm surroundings to focus on homework. Others may study better with background music. But television is too much for anyone to ignore. Your child



should keep the set off during study time so his mind is tuned in to his homework. Likewise, if he has a cell phone or a handheld video game system, have him turn it off and put it out of sight so that he isn't distracted during homework time.

### Have family quiet time

Whenever possible, try to match your household's schedule with your youngster's study time. If homework is done from 7 to 8 p.m. each day, make this a quiet time for the entire family. Do paperwork or read alongside your child while she studies. This will help her stay focused.

### Provide support

If your youngster is stuck, guide him in the right direction rather than providing the answers. For example, instead of answering his question, "Mom, how many feet are in a mile?" ask, "How do you think you can figure that out?" Your child will learn to work independently and to problem-solve. *Tip:* When he would benefit from your assistance, offer to pitch in. For instance, you could quiz him on spelling words or multiplication facts.

### Give reminders

A simple prompt ("Finished that poem?") may be all that's needed to encourage your youngster to complete a project. But watch for signs that she's frustrated or seems to be spending too much time on her homework. If she consistently has trouble finishing assignments, ask her teacher for advice.



## AFTER

### Check homework

Take a moment to inspect your child's work when he's finished. Knowing that you will be looking at his assignments increases the chance that he will finish them *and* do his best. Check to see that his work is neat and complete. If you find several misspelled words or calculation errors, ask him to look over it again. But you shouldn't correct his work—that's his responsibility. Plus, mistakes show the teacher where your youngster needs help.

### Boost confidence

Praising hard work as you notice it encourages your child to keep learning. A warm comment ("Nice job on those division problems") can give her confidence when she tackles her next assignment. Remember, the right attitude can make a big difference!



### Find ways to improve

When graded homework is returned, look for the teacher's notes. These tell you if your youngster understood the assignment or where he went wrong. If he received a poor grade, ask him to think about the reasons. Did he copy the assignment correctly? Did he follow the instructions? Discovering what went wrong can keep him from repeating mistakes.

### Talk about learning

You can stay up to date on what your child is learning in school by talking with her regularly about her homework. For instance, during dinner you could ask, "How is your geography project coming along? What have you discovered so far?" Or while you're in the car, the two of you might look for words on that week's vocabulary list and discuss their meanings.

### Save assignments

Help your youngster create a system for filing returned homework. He might keep each subject in a different color folder. Then, he can use the papers to study for tests and quizzes. *Idea:* Suggest that he post ones he did especially well on—they can be a source of encouragement when he struggles with an assignment.

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*Tip:* The key is for you to stay involved and monitor your child's homework without doing it for her. With your guidance and encouragement, your youngster will learn how to work independently and plan for success.

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Have your child fill in this calendar with the month and dates. Then, hang it on your refrigerator, and encourage your youngster to do an activity every day.

Lee County Schools  
Learning, Caring, Sharing, Succeeding

# Learning Activity Calendar

MONTH

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				<p>Start a conversation journal. Take turns writing a daily question ("What do you like best about the county fair?"), and ask family members to add their answers.</p>	<p>Count the pretend money in a board game. If you divide it evenly among all players, how much will each person get?</p>	<p>Find all the adjectives in a magazine. Replace each adjective with a funny one, and read your silly creation aloud.</p>
<p>Be a meteorologist for a day. Record the high and low temperatures. Take notes on the weather conditions you observe.</p>	<p>Make a postcard about your favorite place in town. Draw a picture on one side of an index card, and write a review on the other.</p>	<p>Read aloud to a parent or sibling, and experiment with using different voices. You might hiss like a snake or boom like a giant.</p>	<p>Write a script for a new episode of your favorite cartoon. Where does the action take place? What is the conflict? How is it resolved?</p>	<p>Cut out newspaper photos showing various angles (right, acute, obtuse) and sets of lines (parallel, perpendicular). Make a collage with them.</p>	<p>Draw an S-shaped path on cardboard. Hold a magnet under the cardboard, and use it to steer a paper clip along the path.</p>	<p>Take turns secretly choosing a household product and reading the label aloud. Example: "Leaves your breath minty fresh." Can family members guess your item?</p>
<p>Help make sandwiches for lunch. Cut them into different fractions (halves, thirds, fourths, eighths).</p>	<p>Use Scrabble tiles to play a spelling game. On each turn, think of a word, and mix up the letters for the other person to unscramble.</p>	<p>Identify plant parts (fruit, leaf, stem, root) in vegetables at home or in the grocery store. For instance, spinach is a leaf, and a carrot is a root.</p>	<p>Draw a map of an imaginary town. Then, build the town using blocks and other toys.</p>	<p>Organize a shelf of stuffed animals by putting them in alphabetical order (armadillo, bear, cat).</p>	<p>Use objects (barrette, pencil, spoon) to measure household items. How many pencils long is the table? How many spoons wide is the TV?</p>	<p>Write down all the ways you can think of to say went (zoomed, traveled, galloped). Use your list to write an action-packed story.</p>
<p>Pick 10 unfamiliar words from the dictionary. Write the words and their definitions on separate index cards. Shuffle, and try to match the words and definitions.</p>	<p>Go walking, and fill each cup of an egg carton with a rock. When you get home, try to identify them using a guidebook or website.</p>	<p>Find out if your favorite comic strip uses more nouns or verbs. Circle the nouns in one color and the verbs in another. Then, tally them.</p>	<p>Use a newspaper to research family activities to do. Write descriptions of a few (circus, movie night) on a calendar.</p>	<p>Draw a horizontal line on an index card, and hold it behind a jar of water. Look through the jar at the line. It appears to bend—this is called refraction.</p>	<p>Look for words in other languages. You might see a Korean market sign or a Spanish bumper sticker. Read a book or go online to learn about the countries.</p>	<p>Make a list of things you read today. Ask other family members to do the same, and compare your lists.</p>
<p>Put a set of magnetic letters in a bag. Take turns picking one letter at a time. See who can make a word first.</p>	<p>A nocturnal animal's eyes have large pupils, which help it see at night. Hold a mirror in a dark room. When your eyes adjust to the dark, turn on the light, and watch your pupils shrink.</p>	<p>Think of a person you know with a job you might like to do someday. Write five questions about the job. Then, call to interview the person.</p>	<p>List the numbers 1–20 on paper. Find household objects to match each number (12 eggs, 16 chair legs). Write the name of the item next to the number.</p>			

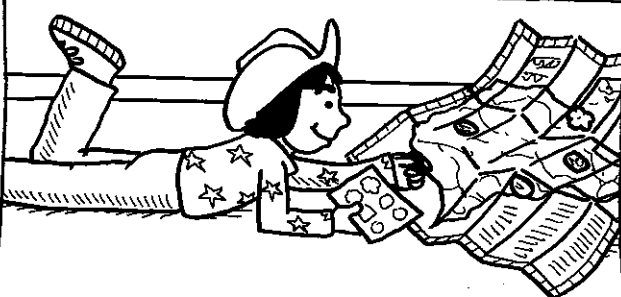
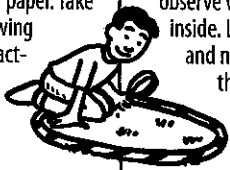


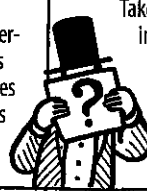








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			<p>List the places you've visited in your state. Then, find each one on a map, and put a sticker on it.</p>	<p>Play action-word charades. Write verbs (<i>float, eat, twirl</i>) on slips of paper. Take turns drawing slips and acting them out for others to guess.</p> 	<p>Place a hula hoop in the grass. Use a magnifying glass to observe what's inside. List living and non-living things you see.</p>	<p>Use a search engine to look up a favorite author's address. Send the author a note about why you like his or her books.</p> 
<p>How many ways can you sort a deck of cards? Experiment to find out.</p> 	<p>Write each family member's name on a piece of paper. Pass the papers around, and write a nice <i>simile</i> (a comparison that uses <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>) about each person. Example: "Mom's eyes sparkle like sunlight."</p>	<p>Color on paper with sandpaper under it and on paper lying on a smooth surface, like a countertop. The sandpaper's bumpy texture causes <i>friction</i>—how does this affect your coloring?</p> 	<p>Secretly pick a U.S. president, and ask a friend to do the same. Take turns giving clues and trying to guess each other's choice.</p>	<p>Read a non-fiction book about a favorite topic, like robots. Use facts you learn to make trivia cards, and share the cards with a parent.</p> 	<p>Clip newspaper coupons for products your family uses (detergent, pasta). Add up the discounts to find out how much money you could save.</p>	<p>Practice creative writing by thinking of "why" questions ("Why is the sky blue?") and writing imaginary answers ("Because a rocket spilled a can of blue paint").</p>
<p>Leave a lollipop in a bowl of warm water for 30 minutes. What happens to the candy?</p>	<p>Carry pencil and paper in the car to keep track of traffic lights. Graph the number of red lights vs. green lights.</p> 	<p>Name an activity (gardening, chess). Each player writes as many related words as he can in 2 minutes. Score a point for each word no one else wrote.</p>	<p>Read a story that takes place in another country. Compare daily life in the book to your life. How is it the same or different?</p>	<p>Use modeling clay and toothpicks to make 3-D shapes. Start with a cube, and then try a pyramid. What other shapes can you make?</p> 	<p>Look up Morse code online or in a library book. Write messages to a friend using dots (•) and dashes (–) to spell the words.</p> 	<p>Fill a clean bottle <math>\frac{2}{3}</math> full of water, add two drops of food coloring, and top off with cooking oil. Close the bottle, turn it on its side, and rock it to make "waves."</p>
<p>Draw as many American symbols as you can think of. Examples: bald eagle, White House, Statue of Liberty.</p> 	<p>Read a short book. Then, tell someone the story from a different character's point of view. For example, use the dog as the narrator.</p>	<p>Number slips of paper 1–25. Have someone mix them up and put all except one on the table. How fast can you identify the missing number? Then, swap roles.</p> 	<p>Write a story starting with this sentence: "If I could parachute to the past, I would go to..."</p>	<p>Print a word in big letters, and hold your paper with the letters facing a mirror. What do you notice? Can you write a word so it won't be backward in the mirror?</p>	<p>Draw an imaginary continent, and give the places fun names. "Runaway River" might flow into "Alligator Swamp," for instance.</p>	<p>Ask each family member to find a poem in a book or on a website. Trade poems, and read each other's selections aloud.</p>
<p>In a democracy, citizens vote to make decisions fairly. Hold a family election to vote on an issue, such as which board game to play or what kind of pizza to order.</p> 	<p>Try to make echoes by singing in different spaces (kitchen, bathroom, yard, garage). Why do some places create echoes while others don't?</p>	<p>Take turns inventing "active patterns" to do. Example: Hop twice, take three big steps and three small steps, and repeat.</p>				

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