

What do we know about the benefits of homework?

Homework is a critical connection between what your child does at school and your involvement as a parent. Some parents think their children get too much homework, others think not enough. People's perspectives on what is good homework vary. Even teachers disagree about homework. Opinions alone can't tell us if homework is beneficial, but fortunately there is research on the topic.

There is no evidence that doing homework increases the academic achievement of elementary age children. There is some evidence that secondary students' academic achievement improves from homework, but only when they are doing at least an hour and no more than two hours of homework each day.

The kind of homework also matters. Homework that focuses on what was done in school that day has less effect on achievement than does homework that is distributed across several homework sessions. For example, practice worksheets on what was covered during math on a particular day are less likely to have a positive impact on children than a project or assignment that can be done over more than one night.

Homework may benefit children in ways other than improving their achievement. Doing homework may improve a child's study habits, for example. It can help children to see that learning occurs outside of school. At the same time, homework will necessarily take children away from other activities (like volunteer work, sports, music lessons, or just hanging out with friends). These are tradeoffs parents and teachers must consider in judging the value of homework for children and families.

If you are interested in learning more about homework, two good books are *The Battle over Homework: Common Ground for Administrators, Teachers and Parents* by Harris Cooper and *The Homework Myth* by Alfie Kohn.

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