

Seven tips for tackling homework

The Homework Life Skills Enrichment Programme (HELP), an afterschool programme assisting primary school learners with their homework, shares some easy tips for children to tackle their homework and make education a top priority.



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Co-founder, Anna-Marie Kaars-Sijpesteijn, says, "Although many learners view homework as a tedious activity, it is vital in building discipline and getting comfortable with the syllabus. Homework is not something learners should tackle half-heartedly as it is the first stepping stone in reaching their dreams."

The programme has been assisting primary school learners in the Vrygrond area of Cape Town with Maths, English and Afrikaans for the past six years.

Seven easy steps

1. **Set time aside for homework**

Set a specific time aside every day for homework. Do your homework as soon as possible so that you know it's done and you have the rest of the afternoon free. If you have extra-curricular activities, slot a time in your schedule after you have settled down.

2. **Allocate specific time slots for different subjects**

Check what homework you have before getting started and plan accordingly by allocating how much time you should spend on each subject. Even If you do not have any homework, revise the lessons you have done at school that day.

When a test or exam is coming up, start preparing well in advance and allocate more time to revise all the lessons. Learning is not about repeating information parrot fashion; it is about acquiring more knowledge. To accomplish this you need to understand what you are learning.

3. Be comfortable at your working space

Be comfortable while doing homework by sitting upright. This will also help you to focus more. Have some refreshments when you get back from school so that you are not distracted by food.

4. Learn to switch off from outside noise

It is not always possible for the rest of the family to keep quiet while you are learning. One of the greatest skills you can master is to switch external noises off by focusing your full attention on the work you are doing.

5. Break-time is important

Give yourself regular breaks. Concentration is at its best for about 45 minutes at a time. Get up and do a few exercises every 45 minutes. This will stimulate the brain as your blood flow will increase, sending more oxygen throughout your body. Then settle down again and continue with what you were studying.

6. Find a study method that suits you

People learn in different ways so find out what is the most effective one for you. If you learn better by looking and hearing things, then find a YouTube video that explains it. If reading suits you better, try finding extra information on the internet but make sure that it is reliable information. Some children find it more effective to study with a friend and discuss the subject. If this study style motivates you, be sure that it is a friend who wants to study as much as you do so that you do not end up distracting each other.

7. Ask, ask and ask!

Remember to always double check what activity the teacher gave as homework and what they require from you. If you are uncertain, ask your teacher or a fellow school friend to be sure - there is no shame in asking!

"We want to encourage children that learning is fun. There is no greater joy than to see learners excel in their schoolwork and getting the confidence they need," concludes Kaars-Sijpesteijn.

Kaars-Sijpesteijn won the 2014 Inyathelo Philanthropy Award for Support in Education in recognition of HELP. For more information, go to www.help-eduprogramme.co.za.