

# Win the Homework Wars

From [Parents Magazine](#)



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As a mom of seven, I'm a seasoned veteran of the [homework](#) trenches. I've valiantly soldiered on despite my kids' complaints about hundreds of take-home tests and hands-on projects. When it comes to hitting the books, it's clear from early on that what's effective with one child doesn't necessarily work with another. Knowing your kid's best study style can help reduce school-night skirmishes and set your young scholar up for success.

## The Procrastinator

This kid dreams up so many things to do after school that there's just no time left for homework. By the end of the night, he hasn't completed any assignments, yet he feels that he's not to blame.

**Battle Plan** Tell your child he has just one hour a day to fill with other activities before buckling down to work. Set the timer, and strictly adhere to it. If he's constantly stalling by calling other kids to get the assignment, ask his teacher to give you a list of the week's work. (Some post the info on the school's website.)

You might think a procrastinator would be more efficient in a quiet place, but some do better in a noisy area, says Cathy Quinn, a tutor in Ossining, New York. One of her students works at the kitchen table. With his mom nearby and a lot of foot traffic, he stops making excuses and digs in. "Being in a busy environment helps him focus," Quinn says.

## The Whiner

The minute she unzips her backpack, the gripes start to flow -- her teacher is too unfair, the work is too boring, her classmates are too bossy. She'll continue to nitpick until bedtime, when you'll realize that her homework is barely finished.

**Battle Plan** Suggest that she visualize putting all the unhappy parts of her day into a big box, and invite her to tell you about them once her homework is done. If she starts to complain before her assignments are completed, remind her that complaining isn't allowed until she's finished her work. Once she has, let her moan and groan to her heart's content.

That said, don't automatically discount your child's bellyaching. If she frequently doesn't understand the assignments or has a staggering amount of work, help her figure out what's expected and check in with her teacher about the level of the homework.

## The Delegator

It seems like this kid is actually game to tackle assignments until you realize that you're the one doing all the work.

**Battle Plan** He's figured out that you can get his duties done faster -- and better -- than he can, so he'll nicely solicit your assistance. "If you find that you're always getting conned into doing your child's work, call him on it," says Tracy Dennis, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at Hunter College of the City University of New York. Boosting his confidence is key. "Reassure him that you're not leaving him high and dry and that you're willing to make it a team effort -- if he takes the lead," she says.

## The Hurrier

She's so eager to get to the fun part of the evening that she rushes through her assignments. As a result, they're barely legible, riddled with errors, and often misplaced entirely.

**Battle Plan** Establish how much TV watching, video-game playing, or other entertainment your child is permitted during each weekday. Encourage her to take her time with her homework and remind her that even if she finishes it in a flash, she still won't be allowed additional time in front of the TV, for example. Once your child sees that there's nothing to be gained by rushing, she may pace herself on her own.

You might also try breaking her homework into parts. For example, give her three math problems to solve, then ask her to check her work before asking her to work on three more. "This will help your child get in the habit of slowing down a little," says

Quinn.

## The Perfectionist

This student hyperfocuses, spending so long on one project that other assignments go undone. As the night wears on and you both realize that there's a lot of untouched homework, he has a meltdown -- and you come close to one.

**Battle Plan** Help your child see the big picture by writing down the day's assignments on a large sheet of paper, using a different color marker for each subject. Together, map out the total amount of time he'll spend on his homework and roughly how long he should devote to each task.

"Let your child know that everything he does doesn't have to be flawless," suggests Dr. Dennis. Try to tone down your praise when he gets something right -- this should temper his emotions when he gets something wrong. Also turn his mistakes into lessons, Dr. Dennis advises. If he gets an incorrect answer, say, "That's not quite right. How else can we approach it?" Your question will invite him to think creatively about how to rework the problem.

*Originally published in the February 2011 issue of Parents magazine.*

**Parents** Parents.com

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