

ENDING HOMEWORK HASSLES

by Elizabeth Pantley, author of *Kid Cooperation and Perfect Parenting*

Experts give the following advice for the most effective approach to homework success:

Give the child responsibility and ownership of his homework.

This is one time in parenting when you can be proud of the things you don't do! Don't hover! Don't rant, rave or rescue! Let your child take full responsibility - even if it means teaching a lesson "the hard way":

Child: *I forgot my spelling book again and we have a test tomorrow!*

Parent: *(showing concern) Oh dear.*

Child: *But I'll flunk the test.*

Parent: *(With empathy) That would be sad for you.*

Child: *You have to drive me to school to get my book!*

Parent: *(sadly) I'm sorry. I have other plans for tonight. I know you can handle this.*

Chances are, this child will remember his spelling book next week after this episode much more so than if the parent would have driven him to school lecturing all the way there about responsibility! Keep in mind, though, if you have a responsible child who usually remembers his work it is perfectly okay to help out once in a while!

Let your child choose how, when and where to do homework. Be a counselor and a coach.

Sit down with your child and help her decide on a homework routine. After school? After dinner? At the kitchen table? At her desk? When a routine is established let your child adhere to it with only a brief reminder from you, ("Annie, it's after dinner. Homework time.) Then BE QUIET. Please, no nagging! It doesn't help, and nagging makes it your problem! If your child "forgets" he'll have to deal with the natural consequences. It helps to let the teacher know in advance what you are doing so the child will be held personally responsible. This method can result in a very powerful lesson. It is inappropriate to help a child revise her schedule or adjust the homework plan if need be.

Limit your involvement to these areas:

- a) Helping your child understand the instructions.
- b) Showing an example of how to do the problem.
- c) Checking over completed work.

You should help *only when help is asked for* and then it should be brief and encouraging. If your child is requiring more extensive help from you one of two things may be the problem. Your child has made your help a habit and will need to be weaned, or there's a problem at school that requires a conference with the teacher. If so, make an appointment now.

Avoid homework related rewards and punishments.

Using rewards or punishments takes the focus away from the teaming process. A child can become so involved in trying to earn a reward or avoid a punishment that it creates problems. Homework is a necessary part of school and should be treated as such, with a minimum of fuss and emotion.

Focus on what your child has done RIGHT.

One of the qualities of a successful person is the ability to see and appreciate their good qualities, and accept, but not dwell on, their bad qualities. When you review your child's school work point out the things that are done right and make positive comments about what you see. Also praise effort and improvement.

Tell your child. "You are very important to me, and I will love you no matter what your results are in school."

Children fear loss of their parents love when they are not successful. You may think they know you will love them no matter what, but they need to hear this affirmation from you!

Be an involved parent. Kids whose parents are involved at school always perform better. Get to know the teacher, attend school events, join the PTA, help out and keep up with class and school activities. It makes a big difference!