



## Homework Strategies for Students with Special Needs

As a parent of a special needs child there are many “battles” we must face each day. We often must “pick our battles” and homework is often one of them. After-school homework can be a time of power struggles and tantrums. Establishing a routine and keeping organized are just some of the ways you can help your child succeed. Here are several strategies to help make homework time a little easier for parents and their child.

### Get Organized

Children in general need structure. The same is true for those with learning differences. Implementing order in their homework routine will help establish and reinforce clear expectations. This can also help your child look forward to what’s next, whether it be a break or a different assignment.

### Define the Workspace

The best space to get homework done is one that’s free of distractions. This can be challenging for the parent of a special needs child as sometimes their own thoughts are enough to sidetrack them. The idea is to limit as much controllable distraction as possible. That means working away from the TV, tablet, and other devices. If you don’t have a designated area in your home for schoolwork, clear off the kitchen table, turn off devices, and establish that as your homework space. Keeping the same workspace every day also helps establish the structure your child craves.

### Take 5

Homework can be overwhelming for any child. After a long day of school, the last thing they want to do is more schoolwork. Scheduling a break within your homework routine provides motivation and a needed mental break. A snack or quick activity helps break the workload down into smaller, more digestible segments. Taking time to refresh can also make homework time more productive.

## Use a Checklist

There's something very rewarding about crossing a task off a checklist. List homework activities on a small sheet of paper and have your child cross them off as they're completed. This helps kids stay organized and eventually grow to feel the reward of completing tasks.

## Understanding and Following Directions

For some students following instructions in the correct sequence can be challenging. It's important to take the time before starting an assignment to go over directions thoroughly. This way your child can have a clear understanding of the task at hand with no surprises along the way.

## Saved by the Bell

Some children have difficulty working for extended periods of time, especially during routine tasks like copying spelling words. They become distracted, talk, or play with their pencil rather than focusing on the work. Using a homework timer can help keep your child stay focused on the task instead of what's going on around them. This strategy helps students have a better sense of time so they are better able to manage their work. If your child is distracted by sounds, a ticking kitchen timer may not be the best option. Try a silent timer on your cell phone. Encourage your child to work without stopping until the timer goes off. This visual and audible strategy gives a reminder of how long the work should take to complete and can make homework time more productive.

Homework is meant to reinforce what your child learns in the classroom and shouldn't be a nightmare for parents or children. By consistently following these simple strategies, homework will become less of a battle and more of an accepted routine over time.