



Homework: What Works and What Doesn't

Q: Does more homework increase academic achievement?

A: That depends on what kind of homework as well as the amount of homework per day.

Q: So what kind of homework is most likely to increase academic achievement?

A: Homework that is an extension, practice, but NOT busy work (example: crossword puzzles, word searches), nor is it catch-up work (example, running out of time on a lesson in school and assigning it to the students to complete on their own in their own time).

Q: What is an example of extension homework?

A₁: Interview a relative as a way to reinforce the new learning, say writing letters, biographies, et.

A₂: Practicing times tables, or other arithmetic skills

A₃: Reading -- with a parent, for a younger sibling, independently when older.

Reading -- material that might not appear to be academic, but still has increased vocabulary and increased language difficulty, and example: *Calvin and Hobbes*

Read-Aloud -- Even after the student is a fluent reader, the parent reads to them approximately 2 grades beyond their grade level, example: *Chronicles of Narnia* to first, second graders.

Q: What is an example of catch-up homework?

Catch-up work is NOT work that was missed due to absence. However, keep in mind, a student who has been sick is not helped to return to double or triple the work they missed. Considering what is essential and provide a week to catch up.

Catch-up work IS work that teachers assign in an attempt to complete curriculum at home, that provides **more** than they need to complete. It's important to keep in mind that more often than not, there is far more provided in curriculum than can ever be completed. This affords some options for teachers.

Q: So, are there any easy guidelines to keep in mind when it comes to homework?

A: Yes! Due to the law of diminishing returns in terms of time spent on homework, consider seriously the cost on family time if too much emphasis is put on homework.

What the Research Shows Optimal Average Time for Homework

The rule of thumb based on the research is this:

On average (some students might need less time, some might need a little more)

Ten minutes a night/Grade level

Example: 2nd Grade x 10 minutes a night = 20 minutes a night