

26 Best ADHD Homework Strategies



From **ADDitude's** Experts

ADDITUDE
Strategies and Support *for* ADHD & LD

ADDITUDE

Strategies and Support for ADHD & LD

A trusted source of advice and information for families touched by attention-deficit disorder—
and a voice of inspiration to help people with ADHD find success at home, at school, and on the job.

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Addressing homework problems is critical, since they are major reasons children with attention deficit disorder (ADHD) fail in school. Almost every parent of a student with ADD has been on the front lines of homework battles. Keep in mind that homework doesn't have to be exhaustive to be effective.

The National Education Association and the Parent Teacher Association recommend 10 minutes of homework per subject per day. In other words, a sixth-grader would spend roughly 60 minutes per evening on homework. If teachers seem to be piling it on, have a friendly discussion with them.

The following strategies can further shorten completion time and reduce stress at home.

Solutions: in the Classroom

- 1. Post assignments on the board.** Write the homework assignment in the same place on the board each day.
- 2. Set aside time each day for students to copy homework assignments in their planners.** If attention or language deficits make copying hard for a student, ask another student to write the assignment and discreetly give it to the child. Posting assignments to the school's website is also helpful.
- 3. Appoint "row captains."** At the beginning of class, these designated "leaders" should collect completed homework. At the end of class, they should check to see that homework assignments have been written down by each student in their row.
- 4. Develop a plan which ensures that completed homework returns to school.** Talk with the parents of those students who consistently forget to bring their homework to school, and help them develop a plan for getting it there. Suggest that they purchase color-coded folders for all completed work. They can check to make sure homework is completed, is put in the appropriate folder, and is packed in the bookbag for the next day.

"Learn your child's rhythms -- when he needs to relax, when he needs to work. We have a structured homework time, and work for short periods. Always check your child's work — he is more interested in getting it done than getting it right."

—Kathy Zimovan, South Carolina

- 5. Assign the right amount of homework.** Some students with ADD work slowly and become easily frustrated. Assigning only the odd-numbered math problems lets a child demonstrate what he has learned without pushing him too hard. By assigning homework that is neither too difficult nor too time-consuming, teachers increase the likelihood that it will be completed.
- 6. Send parents a list of suggestions for productive homework sessions.** Parents want to help their child but sometimes don't know what to do. Two strategies you might mention: 1) establish a set homework time with input from the student; 2) find a quiet location that has good lighting and a clear work space with access to paper, pencils, and a computer.

Solutions: at Home

- 7. Make a plan for tracking homework assignments.** Encourage your child to write every assignment in his daily planner. As a backup, see whether assignments are also posted on a school website. Get a phone number for a student in each class who would know the assignments. One high school senior wrote his assignments on 3 x 5 cards, pre-printed with the names of his courses, that he stored in his jeans pocket.
- 8. Establish time for homework.** Some children need a break after classes. Others work best while still in "school mode." If after-school activities make a regular schedule impossible, post a weekly calendar that lists homework start and finish times.
- 9. Ask the teacher about assignment routines.** The math teacher may say, "I assign algebra homework four nights a week, and give a test at the end of each chapter — roughly every two weeks." This tells you that something is amiss if your child says he doesn't have any math homework two nights in a row.
- 10. Schedule a five-minute break for every 20 minutes of work.** Short, frequent breaks help children with ADD recharge.
- 11. Respect your child's "saturation point."** If he's too tired or frustrated to finish his homework, let him stop. Write a note to the teacher explaining that he did as much as he could. If he has problems focusing, writes slowly, or needs extra time to understand concepts, assignments will consistently take longer than they should.
- 12. Talk with the teacher.** If homework sessions are often emotionally exhausting, localk/adhd/article/744.html."work with the teacher" to determine whether assignments are too long or are too difficult for your child.

"I let my son sit on an exercise ball. Being able to move about while doing homework helps kids with ADHD concentrate better. I don't have to nag him to do his homework, and he does not complain about needing to get up and move around."

—Diane Spriggs, Virginia

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13. Consider medication for homework time. Talk with your doctor about a short-acting medication, like Ritalin, which lasts three to four hours. Taking the medication between 3 and 5 p.m. shouldn't interfere with sleep. Most medications given earlier in the day have worn off by late afternoon. When medications are working, students stay focused, complete homework quicker, and are more likely to remember the material they studied.

14. Monitor your child's progress with a daily or weekly report. Daily and weekly reports from a teacher warn parents when their child is in danger of failing and in need of more supervision at home. The reports help you and your child identify missing homework assignments, so you can find them and get them to the teacher. Younger children need more frequent feedback, so a daily report may be best for them. In some cases, weekly reports may be sufficient for students in high school.

15. Request an extra textbook to use at home. Students with ADD often leave their books at school. Having access to a textbook every night is essential. Once a student with ADD falls behind, it is difficult to catch up. Since many schools have only one set of books for each student, you may have to purchase extra copies.

Solutions: Lower the Stress Level

After a long day at school, homework can be tough for children with attention deficit disorder (ADD ADHD) or learning disabilities such as dyslexia—and for their parents, too. Here are strategies for wrapping up assignments:

16. Start a homework group.

Invite one or two kids from your child's class to come over and do a little homework together. This can be an effective way to get a look at other children's studying strategies, and the chance to play for a while when homework is done is a strong incentive to do the work more efficiently.

17. Consider your child's daily rhythms.

Most children do much better if they do their homework relatively early in the day—maybe not immediately upon coming home from school but certainly before supper. (Everyone deserves a break, and our kids, in particular, may need a chance for some physical activity before they have to sit down again.) Some quirky kids are notoriously early risers, and that can be a terrific time to get homework done.

18. Have a plan of attack.

Sit down and strategize the day's homework with your child: How much has to be done? What looks easy? What looks hard?

“I made my son responsible for his grades. He has to face the consequences of bad grades, and he gets rewards for good ones. If he wants me to help him with homework, he has to ask.”

—May Beth Thomas, Michigan

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19. Have a specific place to do the work.

How can you minimize distractions? How available do you, or some other supervising adult, need to be? You may want to set up a dedicated homework location. If your child's room is the place most full of possible distractions, the best spot might be some boring adult setting: a little desk in the living room or some space at the kitchen table.

20. Reward accomplishments.

We are big believers in small, tangible rewards for small, tangible accomplishments. Finish your worksheet, and you'll get a cookie. Finish all your homework, and we'll go to the playground for 15 minutes before dinner. With the assignments your child really hates, there's nothing wrong with offering a grape or a gold star for every single successfully completed sentence on the worksheet or math problem on the list.

21. Don't overschedule.

If you fill up every afternoon with sports, therapy sessions, and other activities, then homework will have to wait until later, and that may be hard. How about moving some of these activities to the weekend? How about getting your child accustomed to bringing his homework along if you know there's usually a wait in the physical therapist's office? Some schools send home a weekly packet of assignments due on Friday, or the following Monday. This allows for more flexibility in planning, and the final product is more likely to be relatively neat and well thought out.

22. Plan for supervision.

Think about homework supervision as you make your child-care arrangements. If you have a babysitter overseeing some of these after-school hours, give her clear instructions for helping with homework, and make sure she understands that, if possible, it needs to be done by dinnertime. If your child spends time in an after-school program, is there some provision for homework? Many of these programs offer a supervised homework room, where kids can work in peace and get help if they need it.

23. Organize.

For many ADHD kids, just keeping track of papers is a big task. When an assignment is given at school, your child should know exactly where to put the paper so she'll be sure to bring it home.

After homework is done, she should pack it in whatever special folder or backpack is going back to school the next day. The parent who picks up and drops off the child at school may need to double-check to see that assignments or completed homework has been packed. No matter how carefully you plan, every parent has, at some time or another, driven madly back across town one morning with the forgotten, left-at-home important assignment in hand. You just don't want to have to do it every day.

“My husband and I have resorted to tag-teaming our child in order to get homework done. LOL.”

—An ADDitude Reader

“I offer my daughter a piece of carrot or cucumber every 10 minutes or so. She loves the treats, and they motivate her to keep working.”

—Eve, New York

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23. Check in with the teacher.

If the assignments are not always clearly indicated, or if your child has trouble figuring out exactly what is expected, you should either check in with the teacher on a regular basis or establish a connection with another parent who seems relatively clued-in, so that you can, in a pinch, call for advice and instructions. Some teachers are available by e-mail, and some even post homework assignments on a website.

24. Bend the rules.

By far our favorite homework activity for young children is reading—reading together, letting the child read to the parent, and, of course, letting the parent read to the child. If your child's worn out by the evening, take over more of the reading and let her enjoy the pleasant one-on-one contact. We'd like to express the hope that homework reading programs will recognize the pleasures and comforts of reading aloud and will allow children to select books that interest them. If you find yourself with a homework reading program that is taking all the fun out of it, you may need to make some discreet alterations at home—with or without notifying the school.

25. Use tools to plan.

Help older children plan their time—not just for any one evening's work but for the bigger, longer-term assignments. Some quirky children are unable to understand how to break these down into manageable steps, so a chart, a checklist, or a calendar, with separate due dates for each task, can be really helpful.

26. Remember the power of praise.

Try to make homework a period that is associated with a certain amount of praise, with some physical comfort, and even the occasional treat. It won't make your child love worksheets, but it may start to seem like a familiar, relatively pleasant interlude in the day—or at least, like a doable assignment.

“Shorten homework assignments. I asked my son’s teachers to assign one page of grammar homework instead of two, 20 math problems instead of 40. He feels less overwhelmed.”

–Lisa, Florida

“Turning off my children’s text messaging.”

–Kay, Colorado

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ADDitude eBooks **Available Now** additudemag.com/shop

The ADHD Parent-Teacher Handbook

Forge a partnership with your child's teacher by sharing these practical learning solutions for home and the classroom.

Kids with ADHD may forget to write down assignments or drift off during lectures, but that doesn't mean they don't want to learn. Parents and teachers alike may struggle to manage these challenges on occasion, but one thing is clear: When everyone works together to provide support, children with ADHD benefit.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/pth>

The ADHD Childcare Guide

Equip your child's babysitter and other caregivers with practical strategies for handling discipline, bedtime, and more.

Children with ADHD are not willfully bad or temperamental. But somehow they end up with more bruises, meltdowns, damaging messes, and exasperated caregivers than all of their friends combined. Even parents have trouble getting it right all the time. And we know all too well that babysitters, grandparents, and other caregivers need special training and tools. This eBook can help anyone who watches over a child with ADHD to anticipate and manage potentially difficult situations.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/childcare>

Signs & Symptoms of Learning Disabilities

Learn to recognize and address the learning and language disorders that most commonly co-exist with ADHD.

A student has been diagnosed with and treated for ADHD, but is still struggling to keep up with her classmates – though you know she's just as bright. Could there be something else going on? In fact, many children with and without ADHD struggle with undiagnosed learning disabilities that make it difficult for them to read, write, compute, or understand at the same pace as other kids. Use the strategies in this eBook to recognize learning disabilities and devise strategies to help children succeed.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/signsld>

FREE ADDitude Downloads

ADHD 101 for Teachers

A free resource card to identify ADHD in students of all ages – and the common challenges and strengths it brings for learners.

How to Teach Children with ADHD

A quick reference guide to common learning and executive skills challenges for children with ADHD – and solutions that teachers can implement in the classroom.

The Laws That Protect Students with ADHD & LD

A clear, thorough explanation of the federal laws that require schools to provide special-education services to students who need them.

10 Teaching Strategies that Help Students with ADHD

These guidelines for establishing a supportive, structured classroom will encourage learning and enforce discipline. The best part? They will benefit your neurotypical students, too.

IEP vs. 504: What's the Difference?

Learn what accommodations your child might qualify for, and how to pursue them.

10 Solutions for Disorganization at School

Keeping backpacks, lockers, and binders in order.

Find these and many more free ADHD resources online at:

<http://additu.de/freedownloads>

ADHD Webinar Replays from ADDitude:

What Teachers Should Know About Their Students with ADHD

>> <http://additu.de/for-teachers>

Many teachers know that students with ADHD have trouble completing academic assignments and controlling their emotions, but they may not know that roughly half of all students with ADHD fail to read social cues. As a result, they inadvertently alienate their classmates and sometimes their teachers. This webinar will provide teachers the tools they need to understand and guide these students.

How to Fight for Your Child's Rights — and Happiness

>> <http://additu.de/rights>

Do you know your child's legal rights? Do you know how to get your pediatrician to address your concerns? Do you know what to do when you're not taken seriously? If you answered no to any of these questions, you're not alone. In this webinar, hosted by veteran parent Penny Williams, learn how to take your advocacy to the next level and get your child the support she deserves.

A Parent's Guide to Evaluating and Troubleshooting Your Child's IEP or 504 Plan

>> <http://additu.de/troubleshoot>

Many parents find that the IEP or 504 Plan doesn't work for their child. Their grades don't improve, and they aren't learning any more than they did before the accommodations and services were in place. Parents must be vigilant in determining whether teachers are following the IEP or 504 Plan, and whether the accommodations spelled out therein are what their child needs to truly succeed in school.

How Stress Impacts Learning and Behavior

>> <http://additu.de/stress>

In today's high-pressure school environment, kids with ADHD or LD can become overwhelmed by stress. In this audio and slide presentation, hosted by Jerome J. Schultz, Ph.D., find out how school stress impacts your child's brain — and what you can do about it. Get the tools you need to help your child manage academic stress so their brain has room to grow and learn!

Start (and End) the School Year Organized

>> <http://additu.de/scor>

Kids with ADHD often forget to write down homework assignments, lose important papers, and feel overwhelmed by big projects — and end up earning poor grades, in large part because they've never learned how to get organized with ADHD. This webinar helps teach systems for organization — as well as strategies to follow-through with those systems and stay organized all year round.

FREE ADHD Newsletters from ADDitude

Sign up to receive critical news and information about ADHD diagnosis and treatment, plus strategies for school, parenting, and living better with ADHD:
<http://additu.de/newsletter>

Adult ADHD and LD

Expert advice on managing your household, time, money, career, and relationships

Parenting Children with ADHD and LD

Behavior and discipline, time management, disorganization, making friends, and more critical strategies for parents

ADHD and LD at School

How to get classroom accommodations, finish homework, work with teachers, find the right schools, and much more

Treating ADHD

Treatment options including medications, food, supplements, brain training, mindfulness and other alternative therapies

For Women with ADHD

Managing ADHD on the job, running a household, dealing with challenging emotions, and much more