



## How To Get Your Students To Do Their Homework

by Michael Linsin

Homework can be particularly frustrating because it takes place outside of your presence. Once you send your students off for the day, they're on their own – with only the faintest echo of your voice imploring them to get it done.

Furthermore, they may have soccer practice, music lessons, family responsibilities, and other obstacles standing between them and a time and place to concentrate.

They may have a chaotic home life, a barking dog next door, or their favorite video game blaring from the living room television. They may even be left to their own devices, with no suitable place to sit down or anyone to see to their basic needs.

Although the challenges can be daunting, with the right approach they can be overcome.

Here's how:

**Homework must be practice only.**

To have the requisite motivation to get their homework done, your students need to know that they're capable of doing it. They need to have *already proven to themselves during the school day* that they can complete it on their own and without your input.

It isn't fair to them to struggle through work they don't fully comprehend. Even one time will sap their motivation for completing future assignments. Homework is about practice, success, and building confidence.

Repetition, after all, isn't a bad word. It's an essential part of learning. It deepens the grooves and frees them to think creatively and to make connections and associations. Although it's fine if parents want to be involved, it should never be a requirement.

### **Homework must be independent.**

Many teachers complain that although they indeed cover the homework material thoroughly, they still have students reporting that they “didn't get it.” In almost every circumstance, this is due to a culture of dependence in the classroom.

It's due to [the teacher doing too much for their students](#) — buzzing around the room, hovering over shoulders, reteaching what was taught only minutes before. Daily independent practice is so, so important, yet many teachers disrupt this critical time with their overinvolvement.

As a result, their students become so accustomed to receiving immediate, extensive, and personal help that when it's time to truly do it on their own, which is usually at home, they're lost.

**Homework must be nightly, not weekly.**

The guidelines above are reason enough to forgo weekly packets in favor of nightly homework. Your students need to practice what they learned *that day* to further solidify learning and prepare them for more challenging material the next.

Furthermore, with weekly packets, the temptation to rush through the work, put it off until the last minute, or copy from a friend is too great.

Completing it each night, on the other hand, improves responsibility and academic discipline and makes homework less an event they have to steel themselves for, and more a harmonious exercise during which the material becomes second nature.

**Homework must be checked first thing.**

Accountability isn't just a predetermined consequence. It can also be a personal accounting to someone respected and looked up to. In this vein, it's important to check your students' homework in front of them and first thing in the morning.

I recommend having your students set it out neatly on their desk as part of your morning routine. While they read independently or attend some other

learning task, take five minutes or so to walk around the room and [check each student's work personally](#).

This is a very powerful strategy, especially if you're following our principles and your leadership presence is growing by the day. In fact, done right, this strategy alone is your most important homework tool.

### **Respect & Influence**

How your students feel about you is an important factor in getting homework returned. It's a reflection of your level of influence and their level of respect for you.

This underscores the importance of building rapport and mutual likability with your students, while at the same time faithfully doing exactly what you say you will. These two pillars of effective classroom management work together to create an almost sacred respect for you and your classroom.

They work together to produce a deep trust, so that when you tell them that homework is important, they *believe* it and are willing to go to great lengths not to disappoint you.

They work together to extend your influence beyond the four walls of your classroom, and into the homes and living rooms of your students.

To the very time and place they do their homework.