



“Help! My Child won’t do Homework!”

Suggestion and Ideas for Getting More Co-operation and Less Power Struggles

- Give choices in subject matter, time, or place of study. E.g. Would the child like to do Math or English today? When is their best, most alert time of day? Would they like to study in their rooms, outside, or on the couch?
- Alternate bookwork days with outing days. Consider helping the child learn in a different way with an outing or field trip instead of researching books.
- Consider giving tests first and if the concepts are mastered, eliminate the text material. Cuts down on boredom and busywork. If you know your child knows the material, talk to the teacher and request less homework.
- Present the material in a fun way and geared to child’s learning style. Use learning aids such as movies, cookie fractions, board and action games such as multiplication tag. Children in elementary school love to learn through play.
- Follow interests as much as possible, if not in format, then in content. For example, if the child has to write essay or book report, perhaps he could choose the topic or book.
- Use rewards if they work for your child. Stickers, passes for fun outings and computer time are some choices from parents. Have a jar of 200 dimes (one for each school day). Any day the child does homework, put in one dime. The child can keep the money at the end of the year.
- Avoid power struggles. Put your relationship building first. Try and approach learning another way. Listen to why your child doesn’t want to do the work.
- For those hesitant writers, try being the scribe while the child dictates ideas. Or try letting them write on the computer, which is easier on little hands.
- For those hesitant readers, try picking up an enticing children’s book and reading out loud. Your child might come join you if it’s not forced. Model reading yourself. Cuddle on the couch with a child and make reading a fun, cozy, exciting time. Use vocal variety and stop when the child is not longer interested.
- Keep a routine going when you figure out the best time of day for bookwork. This has to work for you and your child. Not all children are “right after school” people”. Be kind but firm in sticking to a routine. Children need some structure.
- Have a written contract each week, month or year that is signed and agreed to by the parent and child, about what work must be completed for that time period.

- Children often learn better by discovery than by being told. Lead them to an experiential activity that would reinforce concepts.
- Some months are better than others. Children go through spurts and plateaus and most do not learn in tidy sequential steps. During a plateau, trust that the desire and motivation will come back.
- Assimilation of material takes time. Plan for playtime, down time and many breaks (minutes, days, weeks and even months).
- Create a learning environment of fun, curiosity and good feelings. Make sure everyone is fed, rested, comfortable and non-stressed!
- Never punish for not doing the work. You want to create a climate for lifelong learning and enjoyment of the pursuit of knowledge. Remember, your job is to facilitate learning. Nudge, but don't force!

Judy Arnall is an international award-winning peaceful parenting speaker, and bestselling author of **“Discipline Without Distress: 135 tools for raising caring, responsible children without time-out, spanking, punishment or bribery”** and the new DVD **“Plugged-In Parenting: Connecting with the Digital Generation for Health, Safety and Love.”** www.professionalparenting.ca 403-714-6766 or jarnall@shaw.ca Judy is also co-founder of Attachment Parenting Canada www.attachmentparenting.ca 403-667-4557

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