

Growing Concerns
A question and answer column with Dr. Marti Erickson
www.MomEnough.com

As the school year gets under way I hear many questions about how parents can make sure children stay on top of their homework – and get the most out of it. It's been a while since we've taken a look through the eyes of a child, so let's consider homework from the child's point of view:

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well, it's homework time, and can I ever use your help! When I see all the different things I have to do, I just don't know where to start. (Maybe sometimes you feel that way about your work.) If you don't mind a little advice, I'd like to give you some ideas about how you can help make sure I do a good job and get my work done on time. First, it really helps when you sit down and help me make a plan. Together we can figure out how much I have to do, what I should do first, and the best time and place for me to work. For example, one of my friends falls asleep if he studies in a quiet room, but he works great with the radio on. Another friend has to have everything perfectly quiet. Some kids feel more comfortable propped up with pillows on their bed and some need to sit at a desk. Let's experiment and find out what works best for me.

Sometimes I feel like I ought to dive right into my homework the minute I get home, and I know that's what you'd like me to do. But sometimes I'm so wound up from being at school all day that I can hardly think. Then it helps if I have a snack or maybe go out and ride my bike for a while before I start my work. I'm glad you understand that I work better after I've had a break.

Mom and Dad, I know I'm supposed to do my homework myself, but sometimes I get stuck and need help. If you tell me the answer, it feels like you're saying I'm not smart enough to do the work. But it helps when you ask me questions, one at a time, that lead me to figure out the answers. In fact, sometimes I can imagine the kinds of questions you usually ask, and that helps me get the answer all by myself. I'm learning to break down the problem just like you help me do.

One last thing, I've noticed that sometimes my schoolwork seems really boring until you ask me to tell you about it. Then when I talk about what I'm learning – and you really listen – it starts to seem a lot more interesting to me. Thanks, Mom and Dad, for being there for me and showing me that you really care.

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