

Occupational Therapy Tips to Beat Homework Stress



Homework. The term often spells dread among students and parents alike. As students go back to school, there's no need for them to also return to previous struggles they may have had with homework. Occupational therapists can help students, teachers and parents look at all aspects of the homework process and the student's skills and help him or her to succeed in school. Consider these ideas to help your child reduce the stress of homework and be successful in school:

- Provide a consistent environment where homework is completed. Doing homework in a different place every day or in cluttered spaces doesn't provide much-needed order and structure.
- Work in an area with proper lighting that avoids glare and reflections.
- When sitting in a chair, encourage the child to sit with their back supported against the backrest. Use pillows of adjustable office furniture to help achieve proper posture.
- Slanted work surfaces help promote good postures when doing activities, such as reading or writing. For example, prop up books with another book.
- Get rid of unnecessary distractions. Homework isn't meant to be multi-tasked with television, text messaging, fixing dinner or other chores.
- To reduce stress, focus on one homework assignment at a time.
- Encourage arm and hand warm-ups such as pushing palms together or stretching before beginning homework.
- Have the student write all assignments down in a planner notebook. Keeping the list or assignments organized and complete can reduce the stress of trying to figure out what is missing.
- Urge your child's school to implement a password-protected website or message board where parents can monitor a student's assignments. By using these systems, parents can help students plan exactly which books and materials to bring home. Also, check to see if your child's textbooks are online, which also helps prevent overloaded backpacks!
- Follow the "20/20/20 Rule:" Take a rest break every 20 minutes, stop for 20 seconds and look at least 20 feet away from your homework or the computer monitor.
- When using a computer, encourage the child to work comfortably and to change their posture often. If your child uses a notebook computer, set it up with a separate keyboard and mouse and adjust the notebook computer to be used only as a monitor.

These tips were all provided by occupational therapists who work with America's school children every day.

For more tips on health and success in school, visit

http://www.promoteot.org/documents/OTTipsHealthSuccess_003.pdf