

What to Do When Your Child Forgets Assignments Again and Again

Forgetting assignments repeatedly is usually more useful to treat as a system problem than as a character problem. Keeping track of schoolwork depends on executive-function skills such as working memory, planning, attention, and self-monitoring. Harvard's Center on the Developing Child explains that these skills help children hold information in mind, plan steps, resist distractions, monitor progress, and adjust when needed.¹ By adolescence, students are expected to manage assignments and projects with much greater independence, but these capacities continue to develop through practice and adult support.¹ Start by locating where the breakdown occurs. Is the assignment never recorded? Is it written down but not brought home? Is it completed but not submitted? Different failure points need different fixes. APA guidance for families emphasizes clear expectations, predictable routines, breaking tasks into manageable parts, and gradually supporting self-regulation rather than simply repeating reminders.² Use one capture system - a paper planner, school portal, or teacher-approved digital list - and require a brief daily check at a consistent time. Add a second checkpoint for completed work: backpack, folder, upload, or submission confirmation. IES-funded research on homework, organization, and planning skills has used checklists and structured routines to improve students' organization and management of schoolwork.³ The parent role is to help build a reliable process, then reduce prompting as the child begins using it independently. Track whether the system works for two or three weeks before changing it again.

Did You Know?

- ✓ Executive-function skills support working memory, planning, attention, and self-monitoring - all of which are used to keep track of assignments.¹
- ✓ APA guidance recommends clear expectations, predictable routines, and breaking complex tasks into smaller steps to support self-regulation.²
- ✓ IES-funded homework-organization programs have used checklists and structured planning routines to strengthen schoolwork management.³

Research Sources

1. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. "Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence."
2. American Psychological Association. "Top 10 Principles from Psychology for Families to Help Children Learn and Succeed in School."
3. Institute of Education Sciences. "Teaching Organizational Skills to Adolescents: Bringing Clinical Practices into Schools."

Daily Assignment Capture and Turn-In Check

Use this page to find where assignments are being lost and build one repeatable system for recording, completing, and submitting work.

Child's name: _____ Date: _____

School/grade: _____ Check-in time: _____

1. Capture Every Assignment - About 2 Minutes

Use one planner, portal, or list instead of several competing systems.

Today's assignments: _____

2. Check Materials - About 2 Minutes

Confirm that the papers, books, devices, or links needed for each task are available.

Materials missing: _____

3. Mark Work Complete - About 2 Minutes

Check off each task only after the required work is actually finished.

Completed: _____

4. Verify the Turn-In Step - About 3 Minutes

Place paper work where it must go or confirm the digital submission.

Submitted/packed: _____

5. Review the Breakdown - About 1 Minute

If something was forgotten, identify exactly where the system failed and adjust one step.

Tomorrow's adjustment: _____

What Parents Can Say: "Let us find the step where the assignment disappeared, fix that step, and use the same system again tomorrow."