

## When Your Child Cannot Start Homework Without Constant Reminders

When a child needs reminder after reminder before beginning homework, focus first on the start routine. Repeated prompting can become part of the routine itself: the child waits for the next reminder instead of responding to a predictable cue. APA guidance for families recommends clear, specific expectations and a predictable schedule for schoolwork, including involving children in decisions about when after-school work will begin.<sup>1</sup> The American Academy of Pediatrics similarly recommends a regular homework time and place, with needed materials nearby so a child can get started more independently. It also notes that some children benefit from a brief transition warning before homework begins.<sup>2</sup> Build a start sequence that is short enough to repeat every day: finish the agreed break, move to the work area, open the assignment list, choose the first task, and begin one small step. If the first task feels too large, reduce it to an action that takes only a minute or two, such as writing the name and date, reading the directions, or completing the first problem. APA motivation guidance recommends making expectations clear and breaking work into doable pieces when a task feels difficult.<sup>3</sup> Use one neutral cue - an alarm, posted schedule, or agreed phrase - instead of repeated verbal reminders. Praise the behavior you want to grow: beginning after the cue, opening materials, or completing the first step without another prompt. Once the routine is working, fade your involvement gradually. The goal is not immediate independence; it is moving responsibility for starting from the parent to the child one step at a time.

### Did You Know?

- ✓ APA recommends clear expectations and predictable schedules to help children know when and how schoolwork should begin.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a regular homework time and place and notes that a short transition warning can help some children get ready to start.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ APA motivation guidance recommends breaking difficult work into smaller, doable parts so the task feels more manageable.<sup>3</sup>

### Research Sources

1. American Psychological Association. "Top 10 Principles from Psychology for Families to Help Children Learn and Succeed in School."
2. American Academy of Pediatrics, HealthyChildren.org. "Developing Good Homework Habits."
3. American Psychological Association. "Motivation Myth Busters Series."

## Five-Step Homework Start Routine

Use this page to replace repeated reminders with one predictable cue and a short sequence your child can learn to start independently.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Homework start time: \_\_\_\_\_ Start cue: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. End the Break - About 2 Minutes

Use the same agreed cue each day to signal that break time is finished.

My start cue: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Move to the Work Area - About 2 Minutes

Go to the regular homework location with only the materials needed to begin.

Materials ready: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Open the Assignment List - About 2 Minutes

Check the planner, portal, or teacher list and identify what must be done.

Tasks today: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Choose One Tiny First Step - About 3 Minutes

Make the first action small enough to begin immediately.

First step: \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Start After One Cue - About 1 Minute

Record whether homework began without another reminder and adjust only one step if needed.

Started after one cue? \_\_\_\_\_ Adjustment: \_\_\_\_\_

What Parents Can Say: "The cue means it is time to begin. Show me your first small step, then you take it from there."