

The Woes of Schooling at Home:

Tips to Help Get Your Child to Cooperate

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With the current COVID crisis at hand and so many “unknowns” many families are finding themselves, whether by choice or not, schooling their children at home. For many families this is uncharted territory and you as a parent, may find it difficult to get your child to complete their daily work. If you have recently made the change to home schooling it can be difficult for your child to view their “home” differently- after all, home has been the place to unwind, rest, and relax after a long day at school. You may have been educating your child for some time now and are all too well aware of the many difficulties that can arise. Whatever the scenario, most all parents find themselves dealing with an uncooperative child at some point when schooling at home. Here are some tips and advice to getting your child to cooperate with schoolwork - without daily battles and arguments.

Don't Force Work

When your child becomes uncooperative, it is not helping anyone to try and force them to continue. Take a little break and re-evaluate. This can be the starting point for making changes that will help your child complete their school work with a more positive attitude!

Is your child uncooperative with a certain program or subject? Pay attention to *when* it happens. Is it a time of day? It could be the curriculum or approach, it could be a subject that really does not interest your child or it could be time of day. There are a lot of variables, so pay attention, keep a log if it is helpful, and figure out what is “triggering” your child.

Your Child's Learning Style

If the problem is a certain subject, try different approaches when completing work for this subject. What seems to be your child's learning style? Do they do better when information is presented to them orally (auditory learner) or do they seem to respond best to hands on activities? If you are unsure of your child's particular learning style take the online quiz here:

<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/family-life/parent-child/quiz-whats-your-childs-learning-style.html>

Once you have a better idea of their learning style, it will be much easier for you to figure out how work can best be introduced to them.

Communicating With Your Child

If you find it is more about your child's attitude rather than a genuine issue with the curriculum, sit down and talk with your child about what they feel the problem might be. Instead of insisting they sit and attend to their work, ask what it would take for them to complete their work. It may be as simple as rearranging their schedule in a way that suits them better. Maybe it truly is the subject material they are struggling with - whenever this is the case, it is best to speak with school personnel about your concerns. Designated school personnel can help identify what options are available to ensuring your child's success.

Whatever your child's answer is, listen to them and whenever possible problem solve with them in order to identify barriers to their getting school work completed.

If you find you are having difficulties communicating with your child about completing schoolwork at home, as well as other areas of daily life, you may want to head to your local library and check out the book [How To Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk](#). This book provides "down to earth" methods for effective communication between parent and child. You can also find a summary of the book's contents here:

<https://www.fatherly.com/play/the-classic-parenting-book-how-to-talk-so-kids-will-listen-in-under-1000-words/>

Addressing Out Right Refusal

If you feel that your child's difficulties have more to do with attitude and out right refusal than curriculum or their learning style, it may help to get creative in your approach about school work. There are many, many different ideas to help getting your child to do their work and a simple Google search can generate thousands of these ideas. Every child is different and what works for one child may not work for another. You know your child best and can select a specific approach based on your child's interests, strengths, weaknesses and preferences. Some of the more simplistic ideas to addressing an uncooperative attitude include:

Use a behavior incentive program- it can be as simple as their receiving a certain number of stickers or check marks to earn a break or having some electronics time. This type of program can be very simple however can have brief positive effects- you may find that you need to "mix it up" a bit if/when your child becomes bored with the program and no longer seems to care about the incentive being offered. Don't give up completely if you did see success for a period of time! Just offer different incentives that may appeal more to your child at the moment.

Try getting school done first thing- The longer it drags on, the more it will feel like they have been doing school all day.

Use games & activities- Use traditional flashcards to play a game of "Memory", play hang-man for vocabulary or spelling words. There are endless games and activities you can do at home to help make learning a little more fun! For more ideas on activities and games you can do right at home visit: <https://www.care.com/c/stories/3254/8-fun-homework-games/>

Be Aware of Your Own Behavior

Children at any age can sense when their parents are anxious or frustrated. If you find that you are becoming overwhelmed with getting your child to complete their school work it is time to re-evaluate and make some changes to your approach.

Disguising Correction—With more difficult subjects make sure you are praising your child's successes and not just focusing on what they are doing incorrectly. Also, it can be helpful to disguise correction. One way to disguise correction is to blame the work, not the child. For example, if your child is working on a math problem and it is clearly incorrect, you could say, "That's wrong." A strong willed child may see this as an opportunity to argue, saying "No, it's not." But if you say something like, "Let's look at this problem again, it's a really difficult one" they'll be more likely to review the problem without argument or frustration.

Reward vs Bribe—It's important to reinforce positive behavior, and that may mean offering an incentive for getting good grades. For instance, if your child gets all B's or above, they would get a certain reward for this performance. The reward was an incentive to do well. One of the shortcuts many parents take is to bribe their children rather than rewarding them for performance. It can be a subtle difference.

A reward is something that is given *after* an achievement. A bribe is something you give your child after negotiating with them over something that is *already* a responsibility. If you bribe your child to do their homework or to do anything else that is an expected responsibility then your child will come to expect something extra just for behaving appropriately. Bribes undermine your parental authority as children learn that they can get things from you by threatening bad behavior. Bribes put your child in charge of you. The appropriate parental response to not meeting a responsibility is a consequence, not a bribe. A bribe says, "If you do your school work, I will extend your curfew by an hour." In contrast, a consequence says, "If you don't do your school work, you're grounded until it's finished." Never bribe your kids to do what they're *expected* to do.

Deciding How Much to Help

If your child is in grade K-2, they likely need one-on-one help for most everything. If you start them off and walk away to do something else, they may feel overwhelmed and just shut down. You may have other children at home, a job to attend to or housework and these other responsibilities make it difficult to provide one-on-one time to your younger child. Try coming up with a schedule that addresses all your regular, daily responsibilities. A more unique schedule that makes time for everyone, including yourself can help make homeschooling more effective for your children.

If your child is in grade 3 and up, try giving them a little more independence. Sit down together at the start of each day or week and come up with a plan of what needs to be done, fill in lesson plans together and make sure to include fun activities too! Children at this age tend to take more ownership when they have been a part of the process and when they know what the expectations are.

Help Getting Started

If you have a child who has a hard time getting started, spend the first five minutes with them to get them off to a good start. Help them with the first math problem or make sure they understand the assignment.

For many kids who are slow starters, this approach is very effective. This doesn't mean you are doing their school work for them—this is simply extra help designed to get them going on their own.

Don't Give Up!

Try to be positive when dealing with a child who is not cooperative with completing schoolwork at home. And most important, don't give up! It may take a few (or more) times to find the right approach to getting your child to complete their homeschool work without daily arguments or battles. Remember the importance of your child's education and invest time and care into ensuring your child's success with homeschooling. Do not be afraid to ask for help or advice!! Reach out to your school's personnel when experiencing difficult times- or find a Blog or other online resource that offers advice to parents who are also homeschooling. Make it a point to be flexible and willing to meet your child where they are, rather than expect them to meet you where you are. Give them time to make improvements and give yourself time to make positive changes!

For more information on addressing difficult behaviors in a homeschool setting:

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item>

[how to reduce the stress of homeschooling on everyone](#)

<https://thejoyfilledmom.com/homeschool-tantrums-identifying-gaps-or-behavior-issues/>