

# homework

## Mind the Bandana!

“My son is allowed to finish homework at school if he fails to finish it the night before. But he kept forgetting this, and his homework was being marked ‘Incomplete.’ Now we tie a red bandana to his backpack to remind him to ‘STOP’ and finish his homework from the previous day. It’s simple—and it works!”

—NANCY SPONHOLTZ, Ringoes, New Jersey

## All Done!

Consistent routines help replace meltdowns with mastery.



What could create more hurdles for an ADDer than homework? It demands discipline and focus after a long day of the same. And youngsters have to copy assignments, bring home the right books, and keep track of due dates—tasks that tend to trip up kids with AD/HD.

What’s the solution to homework woes? Creating consistent routines. It may take a few months for the routines to become habits, but the payoff will be evident in improved work skills, a sense of accomplishment—and lots of after-school smiles.

## SOLUTIONS

### IN THE CLASSROOM

▶ **Set aside time each day for students to copy homework assignments in their planners.** Write the assignments on the board and read them aloud to reinforce the information. If attention or language deficits make copying hard for some kids, provide typed assignments for everyone to take home. Post assignments to the school’s Web site for backup.

▶ **Make sure students copy each assignment completely (and on the correct calendar page),** or assign “study buddies” to check on each other. Before dismissal, have students work together to pack their planners and the books they’ll need at home.

▶ **Provide a labeled folder for bringing in completed homework.** If a student consistently leaves completed assignments at home, have her parents sign a homework sheet each evening when the work is finished and packed in the child’s school bag.

▶ **Lighten the homework load.** Students with AD/HD work slowly and are easily frustrated. Assigning just the odd-numbered math problems lets a child demonstrate what he learned in class without pushing him too hard.

### AT HOME

▶ **Ensure that assignments come home.** If your child has trouble copying homework assignments, alert his teacher. She may allow him to read the assignments into a cassette recorder, or may be willing to e-mail them to you at home.

▶ **Establish time for homework.** Some chil-

dren need a break after classes. Others work best while still in “school mode.” If after-school activities make a regular schedule impossible, post a weekly calendar that lists homework start and finish times each day.

▶ **Select a spot for homework.** Find a place your child can work comfortably—the kitchen table, where there’s room to spread out, or perhaps a quiet nook in the den. Allow background music if it helps her focus, but keep distractions to a minimum.

Don’t let her procrastinate: Make sure she understands the assignment and gets started, then stay nearby to offer support.

▶ **Schedule a five-minute break for every 20 minutes of work.** Concentration takes a lot of energy for kids with AD/HD. Short, frequent breaks help them recharge.

▶ **Respect your child’s “saturation point.”** If he’s too tired or frustrated to finish his homework, let him stop. Write a note to the teacher explaining that he did as much as he could. If he has problems focusing, writes slowly, or needs extra time to understand concepts, assignments may consistently take longer than expected. Speak with his teacher about reducing the homework load.

▶ **Check to see that finished homework is packed in your child’s book bag**—and that the bag is placed by the front door.

▶ **Praise your child’s efforts** and reward him with a favorite snack or game. Some kids benefit from a token system: When your child finishes his homework on time, add a star to a chart. The stars can be redeemed for special privileges or items from a wish list.