

Cover: A student at the University of British Columbia studying for final exams. April, 2009.  
Released into public domain by Gnarlycraig in en:Wikipedia.

# Talking Points for Kids

## Homework

### References

Blazer, C., (2009). *Literature Review: Homework*. Miami Dade County Schools. Retrieved on March 28, 2011, <http://drs.dadeschools.net/LiteratureReviews/Homework.pdf>

Keates, N., (2007). *Schools turn down the heat on Homework*. Post-Gazette.com. Retrieved on March 28, 2011, <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07019/755198-28.stm#ixzz1FyrzccqN>

Wallis, C., (2006). *The Myth About Homework*. Time Magazine. Retrieved on March 28, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1376208-1,00.html>

The Center for Public Education (2007). *What Research has to Say About the Value of Homework: At a Glance*. Retrieved on March 28, 2011, <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Instruction/What-research-says-about-the-value-of-homework-At-a-glance/default.aspx>

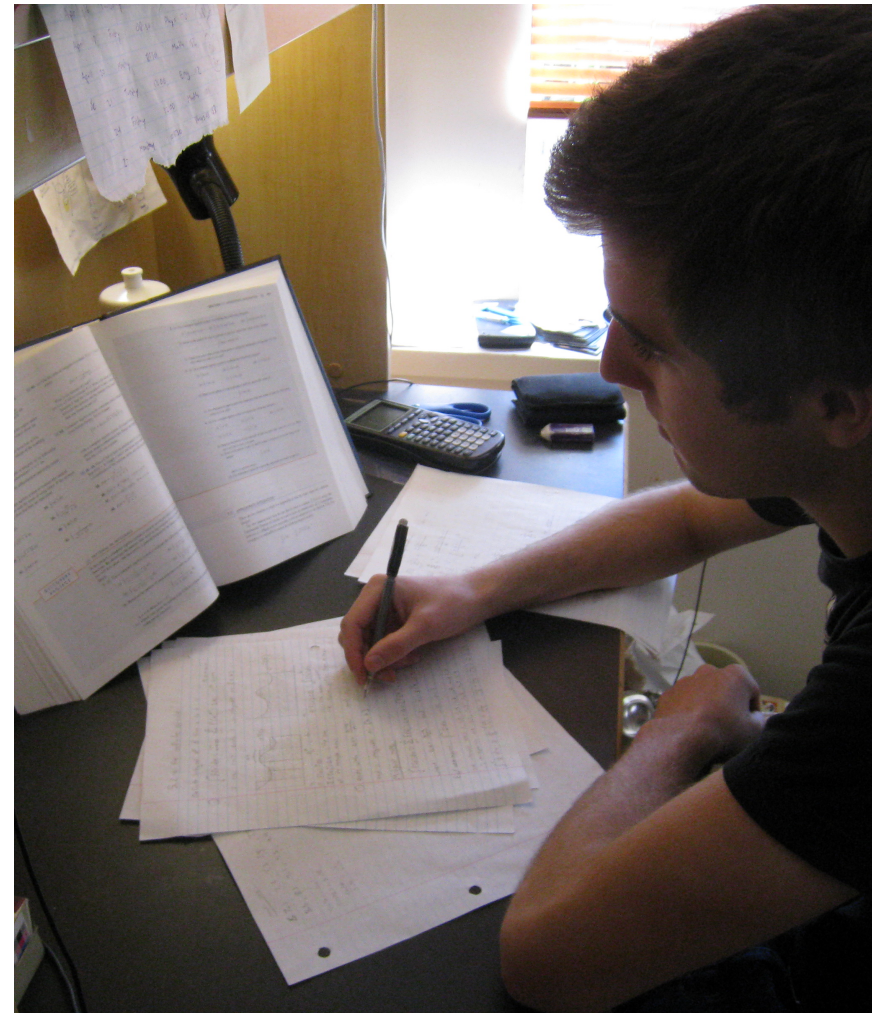


© Elfrieda H. Hiebert. Some Rights Reserved.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 United States License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.

Photos used in this work are licensed as noted for each photo.

Talking Points for Kids is a trademark of TextProject. [www.textproject.org](http://www.textproject.org)  
May 24, 2011



Written by Hollis L. Reed

## Table of Contents

<b>What <i>Science</i> Says About: Homework .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>What <i>People</i> Say About: Homework.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>What Homework is Like in Other Countries ....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>More Facts About Homework .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>What Do You Think?.....</b>	<b>8</b>

## Homework

School is over and everywhere children rush out the doors of their schools. But wait! Is it really over for the day? Well, not completely. There is homework to do. In most schools in America, kids have homework every night of school. It usually starts with only a little in kindergarten or first grade, but by high school it can take more than two hours to finish.

Homework gives students a chance to practice and remember what they learned in school. However, not everyone thinks homework is a good idea. Some people think students need more time to do other things like sports and music. Some parents wish that their kids had more free time to be with their families.

In this book, you will read about different points of view on homework. You will hear from people who think it helps children learn more in school. You will also hear from people who think that there's too much homework and that it's a waste of time. You probably already have ideas about this important topic. See what you think after you read other people's points of view.

## What Science Says About: Homework

For over one hundred years people have disagreed about the amount of homework students should get. They have spoken, written, and even passed laws about it. Scientists have done studies to find out if it really helps students learn.

In 1901, California passed a law against giving homework to kindergarten through 8th grade students. The lawmakers argued that children needed time for fresh air and exercise after school. The law also limited how much homework high school students were given.



Photo: Dünya School students in a classroom in Azerbaijan. January, 2011. ©2011 by Buyerlerdeqalardim in en.wikimedia. Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>).

However, when the Russians sent the first satellite into space in 1957, Americans started to worry. Why hadn't the United States done that first? Americans worried that their schools were falling behind schools in the rest of the world. Maybe students needed more homework after all. As people's views changed, students began getting homework in many schools. Rules against homework such as California's 1901 law were dropped.

But does homework help all students? There are studies that show homework can help students, but in different ways. Homework has been shown to help elementary and middle school students learn good study habits, such as finishing tasks. For high school students, homework can help raise student grades and test scores. However, teachers have to be careful not to give too much homework. Scientists have found that too much homework can hurt students by lowering students' grades and test scores. But how much is too much? More than about two and one half hours of homework per night can have a negative effect on students' learning.

Based on scientists' findings, the National PTA has made suggestions on the amount of homework students should get every day. As scientists continue to study this question, the National PTA may change its suggestions.

Grade level	Amount of homework
Kindergarten – 2 <sup>nd</sup>	10 – 20 minutes
3 <sup>rd</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup>	30 – 60 minutes
7 <sup>th</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup>	more than 60 minutes



## What People Say About: Homework

### Westbrook Times: Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am the father of a fifth grader at Parkside Elementary School. The School Board will be voting soon on a homework policy for all the schools in Westbrook. My daughter, Jennifer, and I are writing this letter to tell you why we think too much homework is a bad idea.

First of all, sitting still and paying attention to the teacher for the whole school day isn't easy. When the school day is over, kids need to run around. Jennifer says, "If I get time to play and go to my dance class, I feel great and listen better when I'm back in school the next day."

Also some of the homework isn't helpful. Sometimes it's easy but too long. For example, math homework can be pages of the same kind of problem. Why make kids do 30 problems if they only need 3 or 4 problems to review the idea? It's worse when teachers give homework on topics that they haven't had time to teach in class. Jennifer says, "In class, the teacher can explain hard words and can also make it easy to remember stuff by showing us pictures or having us act things out. Reading a social studies chapter at home is boring, and I don't really get the questions."

Next, in our family, both parents work long days. At 5:30 pm, when the family is together again, we need to have some time to relax. The last thing we want is a fight about getting homework finished. We also think kids need time to

do other things, such as play on a sports team. There are other things that I want Jennifer to learn too.

We know that the School Board probably won't get rid of homework completely, but at least it should be limited to no more than a half hour per night. Jennifer says, "Schools should know that kids want to have a life, too."

Sincerely,  
Jennifer and Mark Lee



Photo: Children playing street hockey, Vancouver, Canada. February, 2005. ©2005 by Pete in en:Wikipedia. Some rights reserved CC-BY-SA-2.0 ([www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)).

For more information about Talking Points for Kids (© Elfrieda H. Hiebert), visit [www.textproject.org](http://www.textproject.org). Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-cd/3.0/us/>).

Dear Editor,

There has been a lot on the news lately about how unhappy parents are with their kids having too much homework. They say homework makes kids hate school. I don't agree. I think kids need to learn that school is their job.

When my five-year-old daughter gets home from kindergarten, she has a snack. Then she gets down to her homework right away. I sit with her and help. That way she sees that school is important to me, too. She knows that playtime comes after the homework is done. It's never too early for kids to learn to use their time well. How can she learn and remember what the teacher shows her if she doesn't practice at home?

The homework is only writing a few letters and numbers and it helps me know what she is learning at school. It usually takes no longer than 10 minutes, so I always spend extra time reading books with her.

What do kids do when they don't have homework? Most of them just watch more TV and play video games. That's not good for them!

The test scores at my daughter's school have been dropping for the last two years. How can parents complain about too much homework if their children aren't scoring well on tests? I think the students need more homework so that they can catch up.

Jessica Lopez



Photo: Help with homework. Charleston, SC. April, 2010. Taken by U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jennifer R. Hudson. Released into Public Domain by the United States Navy.

## What Homework is Like in Other Countries

Naoki Kano is a fifth grader in an elementary school near Seto City, Japan. His classes don't start until 8:55am, but Naoki and his classmates are already at school. During their study time, they quietly test each other on math facts and kanji, the characters used in Japanese writing. They have to memorize over 1,000 kanji in elementary school. And that's only about half of the characters they will need to learn for daily life in Japan.

Naoki has 4 classes in the morning: mathematics, science, social studies, and music. At 12:15 pm, it's lunchtime. He and his classmates eat in their classroom with their teacher. After eating and before their afternoon classes begin, they are in charge of cleaning one part of the school.

There are two more classes in the afternoon: Physical Education and Japanese. After the classes are over, all the students stay to meet in their clubs. Students can choose from different clubs, such as baseball, art or music. Naoki is part of the basketball club. His team is hoping to win the Seto City Area Championship this year.

Naoki's teachers don't give homework assignments every day. Instead, the teacher gives about one hour of math homework per week. Sometimes there are a few kanji to learn, which Naoki practices by writing 20 times each in his notebook. During summer vacation, every student will work on his or her homework project. For his homework project, Naoki will learn about how rice grows.

Photo: A typical Kanji practice notebook of a 3rd grader. Nagasaki, Japan June 2005. ©2005 by Kanko\*. Some rights reserved CC-BY-2.0 ([www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)).

Japanese teachers give less homework than teachers in the United States, but Japanese students are expected to spend time studying on their own. Naoki reviews his lessons every day after school. When he is in 6th grade, his parents will get him a tutor. This is very common in Japan where more than 60% of middle and high school students have tutors.

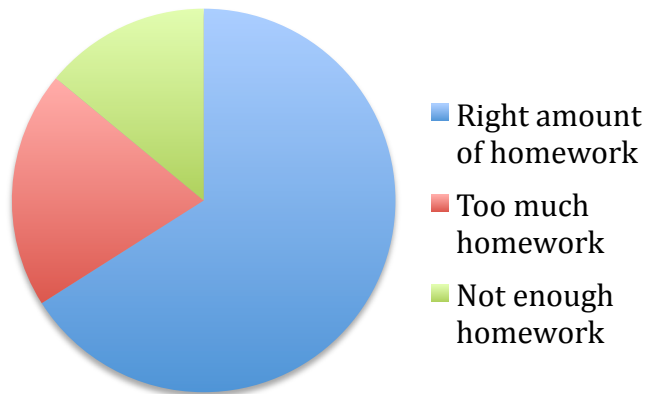


For more information about Talking Points for Kids (© Elfrieda H. Hiebert), visit [www.textproject.org](http://www.textproject.org). Some rights reserved (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-cd/3.0/us/>).



## Selected Findings from Studies of School Homework

- ❖ Japan and Denmark are two countries where students score higher on math tests than American students. But schools in Japan and Denmark give less homework than American schools. Greece and Thailand are two countries where students are given more homework than American students but don't do as well on test scores.
- ❖ On average, the amount of homework given to American high school students hasn't changed in 20 years. That amount is less than one hour per night. What has changed is the amount of homework in kindergarten through 5th grade. Homework in elementary school is now two to three times more than it was 30 years ago.
- ❖ From a 2007 study, it was found that parents and teachers believe students are getting ...



- ❖ It was reported in a study that 89% of American students in grades 3 through 12 felt stressed about doing homework.
- ❖ In another study, only 69% of students report that homework helps them learn more in school.



## What Do You Think?

On average, how much homework do you get every night?

Do you feel like the homework you get helps you learn what your teachers taught in school?

Do you get help with your homework? If so, who helps you?

What are some things that make it hard to get all your homework done?

What would you do with your time if you had no homework?

Do you think students get too much homework, just the right amount of homework, or not enough?

Yes, I think homework helps students learn more and do better in school because...	No, I don't think homework helps students learn more and do better in school because...