

Making The Most Of Homework Time

How Parents Can Help

(NAPSA)—If you're hard-pressed to find time to help with homework, you're not alone. A recent survey conducted by Harris Interactive Inc. and commissioned by Microsoft Corp. showed that 75 percent of parents of kids ages 5 to 18 spend a half hour or less helping kids with homework, with about half (46 percent) spending 15 minutes or less, so parents really need to make the most of the time they do have.

Judsen Culbreth, former editor in chief of Parent & Child and Working Mother magazines, offers the following tips to parents who want to ensure their kids' school success.

Back Off and Back Up

It's important to remember that homework is the child's job. Your job isn't to spend the whole evening sitting over your youngster's shoulder—it's to provide a quiet place, undistracted time, and the resources to help him find his own answers.

Use the Right Tools and Resources

The best thing parents can do is show their children the tools that will help them get the work done themselves. One tool I've found particularly useful is the new Instant Answers feature on MSN Search. You simply type in a question, and at the click of a mouse you get an answer along with a link to the Microsoft Encarta online encyclopedia entry on that subject.

Get Organized

To help kids stay organized, parents should download a desktop search toolbar. MSN offers its own free desktop search toolbar that enables you to find documents, files and e-mails on your personal computer, in much the same way that a search engine scours the



Online and PC tools can help children search for answers and get organized.

Internet. So if your child can't find that report she wrote last year on the Civil War, just type "Civil War" into the box and it'll show you where it is on your computer.

Relate Homework to a Child's Real Interests and the Real World

Once children see that there's an application for their studies, they'll find the subject matter more interesting and compelling. Ask your kids questions such as, "Did you know that quarterbacks have to be good at geometry?" or "Help me figure out whether I should buy this big can of corn or these three smaller ones."

Ask Questions That Demonstrate Your Interest, and Applaud Progress

Instead of nagging your kids about doing their homework, ask, "What's the most unusual thing you learned about the Romans today?" And give credit where credit is due by saying things such as, "I see you got a B on your math test. I know fractions are hard for you, so your studying last night really paid off."

For more information, go online to <http://www.msn.com>.

The survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive among a nationwide sample of 447 U.S. adults 18 years of age or older who are parents or legal guardians of children ages 5 to 18.