

Homework and Study Policy

Introduction

Homework can be defined as any tasks assigned to students by teachers which are to be carried out or completed during non-school hours. Such tasks may include written and non-written work and revision of topics covered previously. Homework can reinforce, through practice, what is taught in class and can enhance achievement by extending learning beyond the school day.

Widespread research studies on the value of homework have shown that there is a positive and significant relationship between the amount of homework students do and their achievement outcomes. In short, doing homework causes improved academic achievement. Quality homework tasks allow students to practise or process information and provide feedback to teachers so that they may check for understanding. Checking for understanding is one of the most valuable ways to gain insight into student learning. Homework has an important role in encouraging independent study and learning and regular reviewing of work and also in developing an understanding of, interest in and love of a subject.

The Purpose of Homework

Homework has several functions among which are- the reinforcement and practice of work that is done in class

- the preparation for tests and examinations including revision work
- the development of standards in the presentation of work and
- to allow for the completion of coursework.

Classroom teaching must greatly influence homework. Homework is just one piece of the teaching-learning picture, one that is highly regulated by the teacher and connected to what happens in the classroom.

Principles of learning that affect the practice of homework

1. Quality teaching matters. Classroom teaching must greatly influence homework. Homework is connected to what happens in the classroom.
2. Skills require practice. Teachers know that certain skills require practice to perfect, and often homework is used for practice.
3. Time on task matters. More time on task helps learning and homework is one way to gain more time for students to learn. Also, some students need more time to process and internalise information.
4. Task is as important as Time. The quality of the homework task is as important as the amount of time required.
5. Learning is individual. Therefore, the optimum amount of homework will differ for some students.
6. Students who have a feeling of competence about learning are more likely to do homework. Therefore, students who have an academic history of doing poorly on homework assignments need tasks at which they can be successful.
7. Well designed homework that students complete successfully can reinforce classroom learning.

In the event of a student encountering a difficulty with a homework it is important that the student produces work to show that they have made a meaningful attempt at the homework.

Parents' role in homework- Parents should be encouraged to be observers, not enforcers. Parents should reconsider the benefits of helping with homework if, by so doing, it is causing stress or conflict.

Parents are encouraged to

- ask their child about what s/he is studying in school.
- ask their child to show them any homework assignment.
- help their child formulate a plan for completing homework.
- provide an appropriate place, free of distraction, for their child to study.
- praise their child for completion of homework.

Parents should **not**

- attempt to teach their child concepts and skills with which the students are not familiar.
- complete assignments for their child.
- allow their child to sacrifice sleep to complete an assignment.

Getting Homework Right

A homework model that focuses on student achievement requires a set of practices that include the following:

1. Checking for understanding- checking for understanding is the most valuable way for teachers to gain insight into student learning.

2. Purpose- homework should have a clear objective.

3. Designing quality homework tasks- homework should be designed to maximise the chances that students will complete it. For example, ensure that homework is at the appropriate level of difficulty. This may require setting different tasks for different groups within the same class grouping. Students should be able to complete homework assignments independently with relatively high success rates, but they should find the assignments challenging enough to be interesting.

4. Competence Component- One of the goals of homework is to ensure that students will feel positive about learning. Homework tasks should be designed not only to support classroom learning but also to instil a sense of competence in the mind of the learner. Being successful at completing homework feeds students' sense of competence.

5. Plagiarism and copying- Students are encouraged to use a variety of research methods to inform their project and class work. However, students are advised by the State Examination Commission that plagiarised work will be of no merit and will receive no marks.

Recording and Presentation of Homework

- If possible, homework should be written on the board by the subject teacher. This should be done during the class and not at the end of the class period. **(SSE strand Three)**.
- Homework, both written and non-written, including review of material covered in every class, should be recorded by students in the Homework Journal. Homework can take a number of forms but must always be recorded in the journal.
- Homework can be differentiated depending on the ability and the learning style of the student.
- Tutors could assist by ensuring that the students have their journals prepared by writing in the subjects they have in the day. **(SSE strand Three)**.
- Students should present homework on time.
- Homework should be presented in a designated copy or folder or as directed by the subject teacher.
- Students should title and date their homework.
- Students should strive to present their homework to the highest standard possible.
- Teacher or student checker to check that student is recorded. **(SSE strand Three)**.

Suggested Time to be spent on Study and Homework

The quality of the homework task is as important as the amount of time required. Homework should be realistic in length and difficulty given the students' abilities to work independently. Too much homework may diminish its effectiveness or even become counterproductive.

The positive effects of homework relate to the amount of homework completed by the student. However, due consideration should be given by the teacher to the amount of time recommended that students spend on homework. The following guidelines are considered appropriate with regard to time for study and homework.

1 st Year	up to 1½ hours per school day
2 nd Year	up to 2 hours per school day
3 rd Year	up to 2½ - 3 hours per school day
4 th Year	up to 6 hours per school week plus Work Experience and Community Care
5 th Year	up to 2½ hours per school day plus 2 hours over the weekend
6 th Year	up to 3 hours per school day plus 6 hours minimum over the weekend

For Leaving Certificate students, the achievement of high grades will require consideration of a study commitment in excess of the above guidelines.

Correction of Homework

- Homework should be corrected as soon as possible and if collected for correction, should be returned as soon as possible to the students.
- Students should look over their corrected homework as a means of improving their understanding and future work.
- Use formative feedback in reviewing the students' homework.

Absence from Class

- If a pupil is absent from class, it is the responsibility of the pupil to catch up on work that has been missed. For example, a pupil may be absent due to a brief illness, a music lesson, an extra-curricular activity. Involvement in extra-curricular activities should not be used as an excuse for failure to produce work. If a pupil has a concern regarding class work missed then he/she should consult with the subject teacher.
- In the case of longer-term absences, planned or unplanned, the pupil or parent should consult with the Year Head for advice on class work and homework.

Failure to produce homework

A distinction should be made between those students who fail repeatedly to produce homework and those who do so only occasionally.

Failure to produce homework will result in consideration of the following sanctions:

- writing a note in the journal
- completing a complaint form
- being placed in detention

Where appropriate, the Tutor / Year Head will talk to the student and if necessary consult with the parent(s) / guardian(s) to discuss what strategies may be used to correct the situation. The first step in improving homework completion is to diagnose why the homework is not being done. One effective diagnostic tool is Taylor's Homework Chain* which requires students to checklist the following steps:

- (i) Realise an assignment is being given.
- (ii) Understand the assignment.
- (iii) Record the assignment accurately.
- (iv) Check to bring the correct books home.
- (v) Arrive home with materials and the homework assignment.
- (vi) Begin the homework session.
- (vii) Complete all homework.
- (viii) Check that it is complete, accurate and neat.

- (ix) Take completed homework to school.
- (x) Arrive in class with the completed homework.
- (xi) Give up completed homework on time.

Home work is a vital learning practice and is one of the few learning links between home and school. Its importance, therefore, should not be underestimated. Parents, teachers and students should work together to ensure that good homework practices are an integral part of school routine. Homework should enhance learning, provide feedback to teachers about learning, allow students to practise skills and enhance their knowledge, and boost their sense of competence when they successfully complete tasks on their own.