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What you need to
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Should Parents Help With Homework?

Homework can be stressful. But help from Mom and Dad might be the wrong answer.

Emily had been stressed for days about her school project: a PowerPoint presentation on the life of J. K. Rowling. Busy with swim-team practices and religious school, she had barely had time to work on it. So she was grateful when, the night before it was due, her dad swooped in to save her.

"He said he was just going to help a little bit," Emily says.

Three hours later, Emily's dad had created a dazzling work of art. It wasn't surprising that Emily got an A.

Her dad was just doing what many dedicated parents do. Whether it's correcting algebra problems, giving hints on vocabulary worksheets, or "proofing" big projects like Emily's, many parents feel it is their duty to help their children with schoolwork. And it's easy to see why kids need the help.

In most U.S. schools, homework



"AND FIRST PRIZE GOES TO... AMY'S DAD, FOR HIS PIZZA DELIVERY ROBOT!"

has become more demanding and time-consuming. Studies show that many kids are stressed over school and feel more pressure than ever to do well. Between travel teams, music lessons, and other activities, some kids hardly have time to eat, let alone do an hour or more of homework per night. It's no wonder homework often turns into a team effort between kids and parents.

But could all this helping actually be hurting?

Practice Makes Perfect

Many experts say yes, especially when parents cross the line between *helping* and *doing*. Pointing out math mistakes is fine—but Mom should not reveal the right answers. Proofing a project is helpful—but Pop should not take over. (Hear that, Emily's dad?)

"I give homework for students to practice what they have learned," says teacher Maura Sackett. Many educators agree that if students can't do the homework

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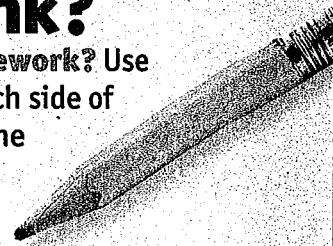
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What Do You Think?

Should parents help kids with homework? Use evidence from the article to support each side of this debate. Write the information on the lines below.



YES

That's what parents are for.

1 Kids are too busy to do their homework by themselves.

2

3

NO

Homework is for students.

1

2

3

that's assigned, they should let the teacher know so they can get the extra help they need. And yes, kids may be busy, but part of growing up is learning to balance extracurricular activities with the demands of schoolwork.

On the other hand, some kids worry that if they don't get help from their parents, they will be at a competitive disadvantage with classmates who do. It's hard to shine at the science fair when some students are showing up with elaborate flying contraptions crafted by their parents.

In "How To Make Parents Your Homework Partners," author Judy Dodge tells teachers that certain kinds of parental involvement can benefit kids academically. Parents can help their kids find a quiet, distraction-free place to do homework, for example. Or they can quiz their kids on new vocabulary or a topic that will be covered on an upcoming test.

So if you ask for help, just make sure you're the one who is doing the learning. A groundbreaking study published last January by two university professors, called *The Broken Compass: Parental Involvement With Children's Education*, found that kids who got extensive homework help from their parents scored worse on standardized tests than kids who managed homework on their own.

So what's the answer to this difficult problem?

Maybe you should ask your parents—or maybe not! ☉

EXAMINE POINTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE DEBATE—AS WELL AS YOUR OWN BELIEFS—and decide if parents should help kids with their homework. State your opinion in one sentence below. This can become the thesis statement for an argument essay.



TAKE THIS ACTIVITY FURTHER! WRITE AN ESSAY USING OUR SCOPE TEMPLATE.