Doing my own homework

When your child is the one responsible for her homework, she will form good habits that will benefit her throughout her school career. Use these tips to help your youngster be independent at homework time.

Your child’s job: Let her choose a usual place and time for homework. That will make her more likely to stick with her routine. She may want to work at the kitchen table after school or at her desk after dinner.

How to help: Make sure your family’s evening activities don’t interfere with homework time. From time to time, ask your youngster whether she needs more supplies, such as pencils, erasers, markers, or glue.

Your child’s job: She should tackle homework on her own. Not only will this help her learn, it will also show the teacher how well she understands the material.

How to help: If your youngster gets stuck, suggest that she reread the directions or look for similar examples in her book. Offer to play study games with her. Also, check to see that her homework is finished.

Your child’s job: It’s up to her to hand in completed work. She can find a way to remind herself, maybe by posting a note on her backpack.

How to help: Together, choose a visible spot to keep her backpack and anything else she needs for school.

An attitude of gratitude

Around Thanksgiving, people often talk about what they’re thankful for. These activities can inspire your youngster to express gratitude now—and all year long.

On the calendar. Brainstorm categories of things to be grateful for, such as people and nature. On a calendar, list one category per day for a week. Then each day, have family members name something they’re grateful for in that category (a healthy grandparent, a beautiful fall day).

Behind the gift. When your child receives a gift, ask him to think about what the giver put into it. For instance, if his aunt sends him a sweater that he doesn’t like, he might say it was nice that she took the time to find out what style is popular with kids his age.
Be a good school citizen

Your child can make his school a better place to learn and play by following school rules and being considerate of his fellow students. Encourage him to be a good school citizen with these ideas.

**Follow rules**

Have your youngster name school rules, and discuss what would happen if they didn't exist. What if no one had assigned seats? (People might waste time deciding where to sit.) What if students could run in the hallways? (They might get hurt.) He'll see why it's important to follow the rules—just like people must obey laws.

**Do your part**

Every school citizen has an important role to play, and helping teachers and classmates is a part of that role. Suggest that your youngster draw himself doing classroom jobs like feeding the class guinea pig or delivering papers to the office.

**Be considerate**

Part of good citizenship is treating others the way you want to be treated. Ask your child to share examples of considerate things he did today. Maybe he got off a playground swing so another student could have a turn. Or perhaps he waited quietly before speaking up in a group and listened to others without interrupting.

**A successful parent-teacher conference**

Q: I’m attending the parent-teacher conference for my son this month. How can I get the most out of it?

A: First, write down what you want to say before you go. List any questions you have. Also, include information to help the teacher learn more about your child, such as the kinds of books he reads or activities he’s involved in.

Then, be sure to arrive on time, and set a friendly tone by mentioning something your son likes about school. Example: “Dylan loves science. He especially enjoyed learning about polar bears.”

Listen closely to find out where your youngster is doing well or where he needs to improve. Ask how to support his learning at home—perhaps by helping him review math facts.

Finally, agree on how to follow up throughout the school year so you can stay connected and help your child do his best.