

10 Homework Tips for Parents

Evidence-based strategies rooted in executive function research — one for each situation you'll face this week

These tips aren't generic parenting advice. Each one maps directly to the executive function science in the four blogs. The EF skill tag on each tip tells you exactly which brain system it targets.

01 Create a consistent homework zone • Task Initiation

Same spot, same time daily. Predictability reduces the friction of starting — this is task initiation in action. The brain craves routine as a launch ramp.

02 Time it right • Emotional Regulation

Most kids need 30–60 minutes of decompression after school before their brain is ready to focus. Don't force homework the moment they walk in — a dysregulated brain can't learn.

03 Be present, not hovering • Task Initiation

Body doubling works. Sit nearby doing your own work. You regulate their nervous system just by being calm and close. You're a social anchor, not a tutor.

04 Break it before they start • Planning

Ask “what's the first step?” before they touch the work. Micro-steps prevent freeze. “Open the notebook” is a valid — and powerful — first step.

05 Use a visual timer • Planning

Abstract time (“do it for a while”) is meaningless to kids. A visible countdown — Time Timer, phone, sand timer — makes time real, manageable, and less threatening.

06 Capture, don't rely on memory • Working Memory

Homework should never live in a child's head. Written list, whiteboard, sticky note — whatever they'll actually use. The environment should do the remembering.

07 Weekly Sunday preview • Planning

10 minutes to scan the week ahead. What's due? What needs prep? What's heavy? This simple ritual catches disasters before Tuesday night and builds time perception over time.

08 Separate 'done' from 'done well' • Task Initiation

Your job is to support completion, not perfect the work. Correcting everything undermines ownership and kills motivation. Imperfect work submitted is better than perfect work paralysed.

09 Regulate before you intervene • Emotional Regulation

If they're melting down, no strategy works until they're calm. Co-regulate first — lower your voice, get to their level, slow down. Then problem-solve. Sequence matters enormously.

10 Name the win • All EF Skills

After homework, briefly acknowledge what they completed — not praise (“you’re so smart”) but specific observation (“you pushed through that maths even when it was hard”). That builds self-efficacy.

EF Skill Key:

• Task Initiation • Planning • Working Memory • Emotional Regulation • All EF Skills
