



Tips and Techniques Getting Homework in on Time

Scripture Verse: *But now you also must complete the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to desire it, so there also may be a completion out of what you have.* (2 Cor. 8:11 NKJV)

Grades: 6-12

Overview: Most teachers at one time or another have experienced challenges in getting students to complete homework. Teachers have tried just about everything in an attempt to get students to turn in homework and do well – charts, points, prizes, pizza parties, to name a few. They have created homework folders that students turn in when they enter the classroom, while others require students to write down every assignment in a specially designed assignment guide. Others have even gone as far as to identify homework superstars who are awarded the privilege of participating in a raffle. Teachers and parents have lectured students on the value of homework in reinforcing learning, developing self-discipline, fostering good time management and a way to improve their grades. In spite of all these incentives, many students would rather do anything else than doing homework.

The following strategy is based on the idea that students will be more willing to engage in those activities where they have a choice and that the probability of success is evident. Kromboltz in *Changing Children's Behavior* (1972) offers an effective strategy in getting junior and senior high students to hand in weekly assignments on time.

Records Keeping

Begin by keeping a record of the number of assignments turned in on time over a two to three week period. This will serve as a baseline to help determine whether or not this change strategy is effective.

Homework Recording

After you have established a baseline count, inform the students that you will be keeping a record of their weekly work. Explain the importance of homework – for drill and practice so students will have opportunity to master the material presented in the classroom.

State the Contingency

Explain that you will have a daily quiz and a weekly test and that these would be based on items taken from their homework.

At first the students will think it is great that they can get out of doing homework. However, when it comes time to taking the quiz or test, they soon will realize how important doing homework becomes. Plus, being successful on the quiz or test affects their grade for the year.

Turn Negative to Positive

A previously aversive situation (doing homework) becomes a positive event since it leads to success on a quiz or test, and ultimately, a better grade. It also gives the student a choice whether or not they want to earn good grades. Furthermore, it propagates the purpose of education which is not just to get weekly assignments in on time, but to see value and enjoyment in learning.

Punishment and negative reinforcement are both aversive techniques which detract from ultimate educational objectives. It is hard to love an activity in which participation is motivated by fear of punishment.

There is an alternative way of structuring the classroom situation to meet these ends. The teacher can help each child set his own standards of performance for what he would learn and reward every child for making progress toward his particular goals. A test is merely a way to find out what the child has learned so *he can* be rewarded for it and a way to diagnose what difficulties the child may have so he knows what he has yet to learn. A weekly assignment then takes its proper place as one possible method for learning, rather than as an objective which deserves to be rewarded itself.