



THE BRITISH
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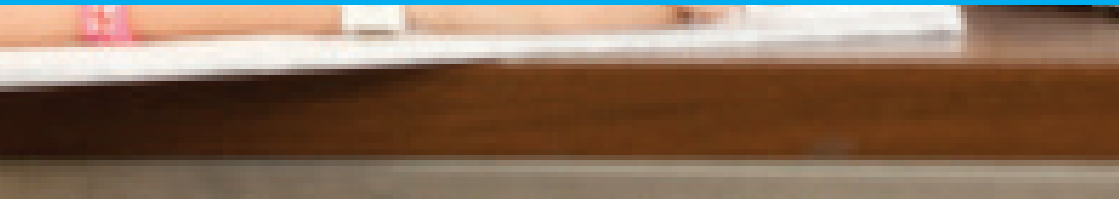
Abu Dhabi, UAE



A HELPING HAND

HOMEWORK

Some ideas of how to support your child with homework
at The British International School Abu Dhabi



INTRODUCTION

“Homework is an opportunity for students to learn and for parents to be involved in their children’s education.

A parent’s interest can spark enthusiasm in a child and help teach the most important lesson of all - that learning can be fun and is well worth the effort.”

Department for Children, Schools and Families, U.K

Families play a vital role in educating their children. What families do is more important to student success than whether they are rich or poor, whether parents have been to university, or whether the student is in primary or secondary school.

Every school will try to promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement, supporting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Studies have shown that children who spend more time on homework, on average, achieve better results in school and that the academic benefits increase as children move into the final years of their education.

Further, the value of homework extends beyond school. We know that good assignments, completed successfully, can help children develop a good work ethic.

Homework can help parents learn about their children's education and communicate both with their children and the school. It can encourage a lifelong love of learning.

In addition to supporting with homework, there are many other important ways that parents can help their children learn. Parents can encourage children to spend more leisure time reading rather than watching television. They can talk with their children and communicate positive behaviours, values, and character traits. They can keep in touch with the school and they can express high expectations for children and encourage their efforts to achieve.

We hope this document can lead all of you facing the challenges of raising children one step closer to success. Indeed, family involvement in education is crucial if we want our children to succeed in school and throughout life.

The British International School Abu Dhabi

HOMEWORK:

A concern for the whole family



A parent's interest can spark enthusiasm in a child and help teach the most important lesson of all - that learning can be fun and is well worth the effort.

However, helping your child with homework isn't always easy. At Parent's Evenings, parents often ask:

- How can I get my child to do their homework? Every night it is a struggle to get them to turn off the television and do their homework.
- Why isn't my son/daughter getting more homework? Why is my son/daughter getting so much homework?
- When is my child supposed to do homework? They take piano lessons, sing in the choir, play basketball, and help with jobs around the house. There's hardly any time left to study.
- How can I help my child with their maths homework when I don't understand it?
- Do homework tasks really help my child learn?

It is hoped this booklet will help answer these questions, and provide practical ideas for helping children complete homework assignments successfully.

Most of the ideas in this booklet will also be helpful for secondary school students.

WHY HAVE HOMEWORK?

The benefits of doing homework must be instilled at an early age in all pupils, so that independent home study becomes routine. The aim of homework is to;

- enable pupils to understand that independent learning is vital to achieving success
- give every pupil the opportunity to fulfil their potential
- instil in all pupils the importance of life-long learning
- provide training for students in planning and organising time
- promote a responsibility for learning within each pupil

Homework can also help children develop good habits and attitudes. It can teach children to work independently and encourages self-discipline and responsibility. Homework tasks provide some youngsters with their first chance to manage time and meet deadlines. Furthermore, homework tasks can encourage a love of learning.

Homework can also bring parents and educators closer together. Parents who supervise homework and work with their children on tasks learn about their children's education and the school.

Homework is meant to be a positive experience and to encourage children to learn. Homework tasks should not be used as punishment.

The purpose of homework, in summary, is to;

- encourage and develop self-discipline, study habits and a range of skills in planning

and organising time

- allow reinforcing, extending and consolidating of work done in class
- give pupils experience of working on their own, and to develop in pupils a sense of responsibility and commitment to their own learning
- involve parents/carers as partners in education
- prepare for test/examinations
- further challenge and extend gifted and talented children
- provide focused and sustained support for less able pupils

Does homework help children learn?

Homework helps your child achieve more when tasks are meaningful, are completed successfully and are returned with constructive comments from the teacher. A homework task should have a specific purpose, come with clear instructions, be fairly well matched to a student's abilities, and designed to help develop a student's knowledge and skills.

In the early primary years, homework can help children develop the habits and attitudes described earlier. From early on in primary school, small amounts of homework, gradually increased each year, support improved academic achievement.

In Year 6 and beyond, students who complete more homework and revision perform better on standardised tests, on average, than students who do less homework. The difference in performance between students who do more homework and those who do less increases as children move up through the year groups.

What is the right amount of homework?

Many educators believe that homework is most effective for the majority of children in early primary years when it does not exceed 20 minutes each school day. From years 4 to 6, many educators recommend from 20 to 40 minutes of homework per school day for most students. For secondary students, generally, up to 2 hours a school day is thought to be suitable.

Amounts that vary from these guidelines are fine for some students. Talk with your child's teacher if you are concerned about either too much or too little homework. Remember there has to be a consistent amount for the class and year group.

HOW TO HELP

Create the right environment

Show you think education and homework are important

Children need to know that their parents and adults close to them think homework is important. If they know their parents care, children have a good reason to complete their homework and hand it in on time. There is a lot that you can do to show that you value education and homework.

Set a regular time

Finding a regular time for homework helps children finish tasks. The best schedule is one that works for your child and your family. What works well in one household may not work in another.

Of course, a good schedule depends in part on your child's age, as well as individual needs. For instance, one youngster may work best in the afternoon after an hour of play and another may be more efficient after dinner. However, late at night, when children are tired, is seldom a good time.

Outside activities, such as sports or music lessons, may mean that you need a flexible schedule. Your child may study after school on some days and in the evening on others. If there is not enough time to finish homework, your child may need to drop some activities to ensure they are not over doing it! Homework must be a high priority.

You will need to work with your child to develop a schedule. An older student can probably make up a schedule independently, although you will want to make sure it is a good one.

It may help to write out the schedule and put it in a place where you will see it often, such as the fridge door or their own study area.

Some families have a required amount of time that children must devote to homework or some other learning activity each school night; the length of time can vary depending upon the child's age. For instance, if your child is in year 6, they know that they are expected to spend an hour doing homework, reading, or researching on the internet and so may be less likely to rush through their homework so they can watch television.

A required amount of time may also discourage them from 'forgetting' to bring home homework and help them adjust to a routine.

Pick a place

A study area should be well lit, with resources close by and be fairly quiet.

A study area does not have to be fancy. A desk in the bedroom is nice but for many youngsters the kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine.

Your child may enjoy decorating a special study corner. A plant, a brightly coloured container to hold pencils, and some favourite artwork taped to the walls can make study time more pleasant.

Remove distractions

Turn off the television and discourage social telephone calls during homework time. A call to a classmate about a homework task may, however, be helpful. Some youngsters work well with quiet background music but loud noise from the stereo or radio is not helpful.

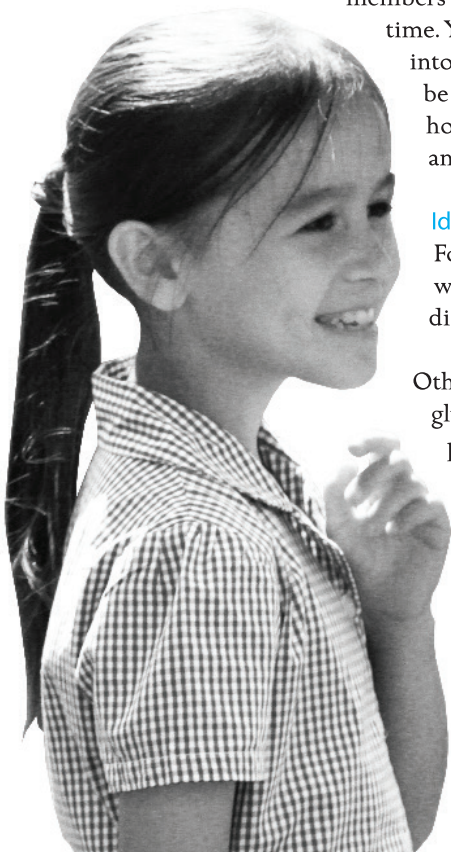
If you live in a small or noisy household, try having all family members take part in a quiet activity during homework time. You may need to take a noisy toddler outside or into another room to play. If distractions cannot be avoided, your child may want to complete homework in a nearby place where it is quiet and supportive to learning.

Identify and provide resources

For starters, collect pencils, pens, rubbers, writing paper, their homework book, a dictionary and a thesaurus.

Other things that might be helpful include glue, a stapler, paper clips, maps, a calculator, a pencil sharpener, tape, scissors, a ruler and a computer. Keep these items together in one place if possible.

If you cannot provide your child with needed supplies, check with the teacher about possible sources of assistance. Some internet tasks can be done and printed off in school during playtimes.



For books and other information resources, check with the school. The school libraries have work stations designed especially to assist children with school work. The libraries are also open to children during lunch and after school.

These days, schools use computers frequently and many households have personal computers. However, you do not have to have a computer in your home in order for your child to complete homework successfully.

You may want to ask the teacher to explain school policy about the use of computers or any special equipment for homework. Certainly, computers can be a great learning tool and helpful for some tasks. They can be used for word processing and on-line reference resources, as well as educational programmes and games to sharpen skills. There may be an after-school activity on offer where your child can use the school computers.

However, try to ensure your child is not simply copying information for their homework. Teachers will want to see elements of the children's own work and wording.

Set a good example

Children are more likely to study if they see you reading, writing, and doing things that require thought and effort on your part. Talk with your child about what you are reading and writing, even if it is something as simple as making a shopping list. Tell them about what you do at work. Encourage activities that support learning such as educational games, library visits, walks in the park, trips to the zoo or museums and jobs that teach a sense of responsibility.

Show an interest

Make time to take your child to the library to look at materials needed for homework and for fun too. Try to read with your child as often as you can. Talk about school and learning activities in family conversations. Ask your child what was discussed in class that day. If he or she does not have much to say, try another approach. For example, ask your child to read aloud a story he or she wrote or discuss the results of a science experiment.

Another good way to show your interest is to attend school activities such as shows and sports events. If you can, volunteer to help in the classroom or at special events. Getting to know some classmates and other parents not only shows you have an interest in your child's education but helps build a network of support for you and your child.

Monitor homework

Children are more likely to complete their homework successfully when parents monitor homework. How closely you need to monitor depends upon the age of your child, how independent they are, and how well they do in school. Whatever the age of your child, if assignments are not getting done, more supervision is needed.

Here are some good ways to monitor homework:

Ask about The British International School Abu Dhabi's Homework Policy

At the start of the school year, ask the teacher;

- What types of homework will be given?
- How long are students expected to take to complete it?
- How does the teacher want you to be involved?
- Teachers' expectations vary. Ask your child's teacher what you should do. Should you just check to make sure the homework is done, or should you do something more?

Some teachers want parents to go over the homework and point out errors, while others ask parents to simply check to make sure the homework is completed.

It is also a good idea to ask the teacher to call you if any problems with homework arise.

Be available

Primary school children often like to have someone in the same room when working on their homework in case they have questions. If your child is supervised by someone else, talk to that person about what you expect regarding homework.

Look over completed homework

It is usually a good idea to check to see that your primary school child has finished his or her homework. If you are not there when the homework is finished, look at it when you get home. After the teacher returns completed homework, read the comments to see if your child has completed the homework task set to the appropriate standard.

Monitor television viewing and game playing

On average, children spend more time watching television than they do completing homework. In many homes, more homework gets done when television time is limited. Once you and your child have worked out a homework schedule, take time to discuss how much television and what programmes he or she can watch.

It is worth noting that television can be a learning tool. Look for programmes that relate to what your child is studying in school, such as programmes on history or science or films based on famous children's literature. When you can, watch shows with your child, discuss them, and encourage follow-up activities such as reading or a trip to a museum.

Provide guidance

The basic rule is, 'don't do the homework yourself'. It is not your homework, it is your child's. Doing homework for your child will not help them understand and use information effectively. It will not help your child become confident in their own abilities.

It can be hard for parents to let children work through problems alone and learn from their mistakes. It is also hard to know where to draw the line between supporting and doing.

Different teachers have different ideas about the best way for parents to provide guidance. Below are a few suggestions with which most teachers agree:

Figure out how your child learns best

If you understand something about the style of learning that suits your child, it will be easier for you to help them.

If you have never thought about this style, observe your child. See if they works better alone or with someone else. If your child gets more done when working with someone else, they may want to complete some homework with a brother or sister or a classmate. Some homework, however, is meant to be done alone. Check with the teacher if you are not sure.

Other things to consider about learning styles:

Does your child learn things best when they can see them? If so, drawing a picture or a chart may help with some homework. For example, after reading a science book, your child may not remember the difference between the tibia and the fibula but by drawing a picture of the leg and labelling the bones, they can remember easily.

Does your child learn things best when they can hear them? Your child may need to listen to a story or have directions read to them. Too much written material or too many pictures or charts may confuse them.

Does your child understand some things best when they can handle or move them? An apple cut four, six or eight ways could help you child learn about fractions.

Help your child get organised.

As mentioned earlier, it is a good idea to set a regular time for children to do homework. Put up a calendar in a place where you will see it often and record homework on it. If your child is not able to write yet, then do it for them until they can do it by themselves. Writing out homework tasks will get your child used to the idea of keeping track of what is due and when. You may want to write deadline dates for each piece in their homework book instead of on a calendar.

A bag for books will make it easier to carry homework to and from school.



Encourage them

Encourage good study habits

Teachers generally give children tips on how to study but it takes time and practice to develop good habits. You can reinforce these habits at home. For example:

Help your child structure time in order to complete homework. For example, if your secondary child has a biology assignment due in 3 weeks, discuss all the steps they need to take to complete it on time, including:

- selecting a topic,
- doing the research by looking up books and other materials on the topic and taking notes,
- figuring out what questions to discuss,
- drafting an outline,
- writing a rough draft and
- revising and completing the final draft.

Encourage your child to write down how much time they expect to spend on each step.

Help your child get started when they have to do research reports or other big pieces of homework

Encourage your child to use the library. If they are not sure where to begin, suggest asking the librarian for ideas. If they using a computer for on-line reference resources, whether the computer is at home, school or the library, make sure they are getting whatever help they need to use it properly. After your child has done the research, listen while they tell you the points they want to make in the report.

Give practice tests

Help your child prepare for a spelling test by saying the words while they write them down. Then have your child correct their own test. Encourage them to write imaginative sentences using the spelling words to ensure they understand the context the word is used in.

Help your child avoid last-minute cramming

Review with your child how to study for their tests well before it is to be given. You can help them to work out a schedule of what they need to do to, make up a practice test, and write down answers to the questions they have made up.

Talk with your child about how to take a test

Be sure your child understands how important it is to read the instructions carefully and to keep track of the time and avoid spending too much time on any one question.

Talk about the homework

Ask your child questions. Talking can help him think through a homework task and break it down into small, workable parts. Below are some sample questions:

- **Do you understand what you are supposed to do?**
After your child has read the instructions, ask them to tell you in their own words what the homework is about. If your child cannot read yet, the teacher may have sent home instructions that you can read to them. If your child does not understand the instructions, read them with him or her and talk about the homework. Are there words they does not understand? How can he or she find out what they mean? If neither you nor your child understands a task, call a classmate or contact the teacher.
- **What do you need to do to finish the homework?**
Your child may want to talk through the steps with you or make a written list of them, if they are able to.
- **Do you need help in understanding how to do your work?**
See if your child needs to learn more about the subject before they can complete the homework task. Find out if the teacher needs to explain the subject matter again. If you understand the subject yourself, you may want to work through some examples with your child - but remember to let your child do the homework themselves.
- **Have you ever done any exercises like the ones you are supposed to do now?**
See if your child has already done a similar activity that can guide him or her in completing the task in hand.
- **Do you have everything you need to do the homework?**
Sometimes your child needs special equipment, such as coloured pencils, rulers, maps, or reference books to complete a homework task. As mentioned before, check with the teacher for possible sources of assistance if you are unable to provide these. Check with the school library for books and other information resources.
- **Does your answer make sense to you?**
Sometimes the response to a problem does not seem logical, or the meaning of a paragraph your child has written is unclear. If that is the case, your child may need to check over the problem or revise the paragraph.
If your child is still confused, ask:
 - How far have you got with the homework?
 - Do you need to look at your notes or re-read a chapter in your textbook before you do the homework?
 - Are you still having problems? Maybe it would help to take a break or have a snack.

Give praise

People of all ages respond to praise and children need encouragement from the people whose opinions they value most - their parents. "Great book report!" or "You've done a brilliant job" can go a long way toward motivating your child to complete homework tasks.

Children also need to know when they have not done their best work. Make criticism constructive. Instead of saying "You aren't going to hand in that mess, are you?" try, "The teacher will understand your ideas better if you use your best handwriting." Then give praise when a neat version is completed.

Talk with someone at school to resolve problems

Homework hassles can often be avoided when parents value, monitor, and guide their children's homework. However, sometimes helping in these ways is not enough. Problems can still come up. If they do, the school, teachers, parents, and students may need to work together to resolve them.

Share your concerns with the teacher

You may want to contact the teacher if;

- your child refuses to do their homework, even though you have tried hard to get them to do it
- instructions are unclear
- you cannot seem to help your child get organised to finish the assignments
- you cannot provide needed supplies or materials
- neither you nor your child can understand the purpose of homework
- the tasks are often too hard or too easy
- your child has missed school and needs to catch up with homework

In these cases, the teacher will always try to be helpful in resolving such problems.

Work with the school

Communication between teachers and parents is very important in solving homework

problems. At The British International School Abu Dhabi you will receive regular emails from your child's class teacher or form tutor to keep you up to date with what has been completed in class and the homework set.

Talk with teachers early in the school year.

Try to make an effort to talk to them every day, first thing in the morning or when picking your child up at the end of the school day. By talking to the teachers frequently you can air concerns freely. The teachers will also be able to share concerns with you, as well as celebrate successes of the day. Get acquainted before problems arise, and let teachers know that you want to be kept informed. All teachers have an open door policy where you are always able to share arising concerns with them. If you feel a more formal time for both parents to meet the teacher is needed, then you are always able to arrange a meeting.

Contact the teacher as soon as you suspect your child has a homework problem or if you think they are having any major problems with their schoolwork. As a school, we have a responsibility to keep parents informed and you have a right to be upset if you do not find out until you receive your child's report that your child is having difficulties. However, sometimes parents figure out that a problem exists before the teacher does. By alerting the teacher, you can work together to solve a problem in its early stages.

Arrange a meeting with the teacher

Request a meeting with the teacher to discuss homework problems. Tell the teacher briefly why you want to meet. You might say, "Rachel is having trouble with her maths homework. I'm worried about why she can't finish the problems and what we might do to help her."

Parents for whom English is a second language may need to make special arrangements for meeting with the teacher, such as including another person who is bilingual. Please do not feel apprehensive about this, with over 60 different nationalities in the school, we understand the difficulties of languages!

Let the teacher know if your child finds the homework set too hard or too easy. Teachers also like to know when children are particularly excited about an assignment. Of course, not all homework can be expected to interest your child and be perfectly suited to them.

However, most teachers want to assign homework that children enjoy and can complete successfully. Teachers welcome feedback from parents.

Often homework can be structured so that a wide range of children will find assignments interesting. For example:

- different approaches to the same topic or lesson can be offered to students
- extra homework can be given to students who want more challenge and
- specialized homework can be given to students having trouble in a particular area.

While meeting with the teacher, explain what you think is going on. You can also meet to discuss the issue if you are unsure as to what the problem is. Sometimes a child's version of what is happening is not the same as the teacher's version. For example, your child may tell you that the teacher never explains the homework so they can understand them. On the other hand, the teacher may tell you that your child is not paying attention when the homework is explained.

Work out a way to solve or lessen the problem. The strategy will depend on what the problem is, how severe it is, and the needs of your child. For instance:

- Is the homework often too hard? Maybe your child has fallen behind and will need extra help from a teacher or parent to catch up.
- Does your child need to make up a lot of work because of absences? The first step might be working out a schedule with the teacher.
- Has your child been diagnosed with a learning disability or is one suspected? If so, you will need to make sure your child gets extra help and the teacher may need to adjust some assignments.

HELPING YOUR CHILD BECOME CONFIDENT

Homework can bring children, parents, and teachers together in a common effort to improve student learning. The younger your child is when you start to do the kinds of activities suggested in this guide, the better.

Helping your child with homework is an opportunity to improve your child's chances of doing well in school and life. By helping your child with homework, you can help them learn important lessons about discipline and responsibility. You can open up lines of communication between you and your child, and you and the school. You are in a unique position to help your child make connections between school work and the 'real world,' and thereby bring meaning and some fun to your child's homework experience.

Whether you succeed in doing all of the activities suggested in this guide is not what is most important. What is most important is that you are willing to take the time and make the effort to be involved in your child's education.



HOMEWORK EXPECTATIONS

Key Stage 1 and 2

Your child's class teacher will set homework on a weekly basis. This will enable teachers to assess pupil's understanding; pupils to reinforce what they have already learnt at school, as well as develop good study habits.

Children will receive homework on Thursdays, personalised to suit requirements.

All homework is to be returned to school the following Tuesday. The completion of homework is compulsory. Pupils who do not hand in their homework on time will be required to complete it during their break and lunch times. If there is a valid reason for not completing homework, please inform your child's class teacher.

As a guide the homework will consist of the following:

- Spelling
- Numeracy - homework based around the area of Maths being studied that week.
- Other, which will consist of Literacy, Humanities, Science and will vary from week to week.
- It is expected that the children will read every day.

Please find below a table showing approximately how much time should be spent on each piece of homework each week for years 4-6

	General (Including spelling and reading)	Spelling	Reading (daily)
Year 4	60 minutes	15 minutes	10 minutes
Year 5	75 minutes	15 minutes	15 minutes
Year 6	90 minutes	20 minutes	15 minutes

HOME STUDY EXPECTATIONS

Secondary

The purpose of home study is:

- To encourage students to develop key skills for independent learning, such as information retrieval, planning, analysis and time management.
- To consolidate and reinforce skills and understanding developed in lessons;
- To extend learning, for example through additional reading, research;
- To sustain the involvement of parents in the management of students learning and keep them informed about the work students are doing

Types of Home Study

You can expect your child to be set variety of home study tasks. These might include the following:

- Questions
- Research
- Reading
- Extended Writing
- Past Papers
- Notes
- Learning/ Revision

MINIMUM time, per subject, to be spent on Home Study

SUBJECT	YEAR 7	YEAR 8
English	2 x 30 min	2 x 30 min
Maths	2 x 30 min	2 x 30 min
Science	2 x 30 min	2 x 30 min
French/ German/ ESL	1 x 30 min	1 x 30 min
Art, History, Geography	1 x 30 min	1 x 30 min
Music, Drama,	1 x 30 min	1 x 30 min

SUBJECT	YEAR 9
English	2 x 30 min
Maths	2 x 30 min
Science	2 x 30 min
French/ German/ ESL	1 x 45 min
History/ Geography/ ICT/ DT/ Art	1 x 30 min*
Music/ Drama	1 x 30 min**

Year 10 and Year 11

Students in Year 10 and Year 11 will be set an average of at least 1 hour per subject per week, with the exception of English, Maths and Science (at least 2 hours per week).

Year 12

Students following Higher Level should expect to have up to 4 hours of home study per subject and 2.5 hours for Standard Level. This may be a combination of research, wider reading and written work. Students should also re-read notes between classes. It is the responsibility of the student to use their Study Planners or equivalent to organise the demands of their courses and if they foresee any difficulties in meeting home study deadlines to negotiate rescheduling of required work ahead of the hand-in date.

Finally

It is important to note that we consider that the times outlined above is the minimum amount of time per subject which students should spend on their home study activities. Please remember that some homework will take the form of an extended project, lasting, for example, in the case of history and geography, over the course of half a term. Departments also make full use of technology to support home study. For example the maths department uses a website and the science department makes full use of Moodle when setting homework.



THE BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Abu Dhabi, UAE

There are very few aspects of a parent's responsibility that are more important to the growth and development of their children than the school that they choose.

The British International School Abu Dhabi offers a superb, forward looking education featuring the very best of the British educational system.