

Homework Help

“Why do I have to do homework?”

This is one time when answering a question with a question can work. Ask your child why she does soccer drills or practices her trumpet. Explain, “Homework helps you do better in school, the same way that practicing soccer helps you play better in games.”

Use this guide to help your youngster get the most out of homework—and put an end to homework battles.

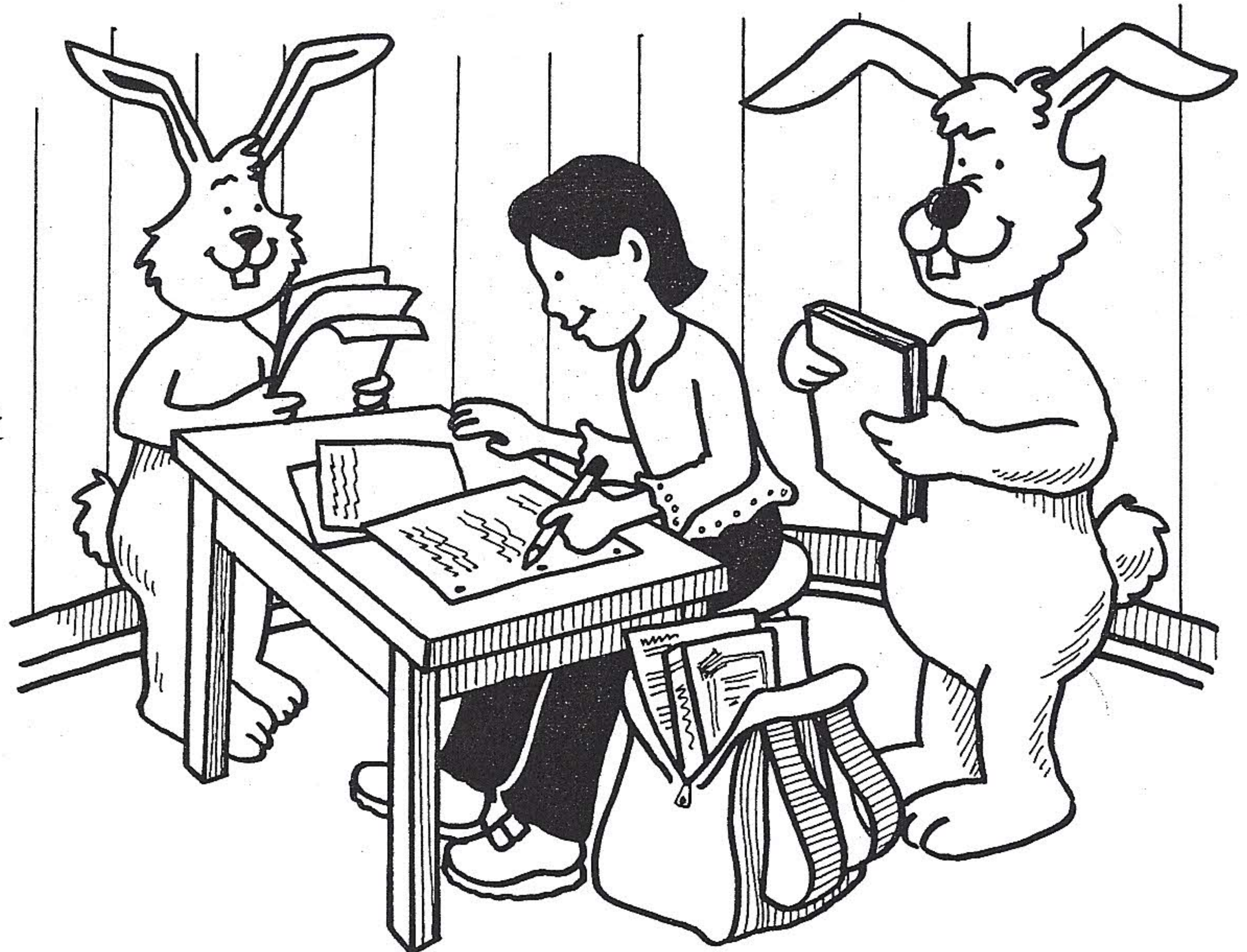
Developing a homework routine

The way you approach your child’s homework sends an important message. Show her that homework is important by giving it a regular time slot, helping her choose the best way to work, and teaching her to organize assignments and supplies. Here are some tips:

- Does your youngster need playtime before settling into homework, or does she prefer getting her work done right after school? Try each way for a week, and keep track of the results (how long her homework takes, her mood, how well she does her work). Together, decide which time slot works best.
- Let your child experiment with work conditions, too. Some children concentrate better in silence, while others need background noise such as soft music. If your youngster has trouble paying attention at the kitchen table, let her try stretching out on the family room floor.
- Keep school supplies in a basket or shoe box, stored in a handy spot. When it’s homework time, your child can grab the container and get started. Include pencils, paper, crayons, markers, ruler, scissors, glue, and other items she might need like a calculator and dictionary.
- Be sure your youngster has a plan for bringing home papers and books. You might get her a special folder (*example*: her favorite color) where she can put assignments as they’re given. Before leaving school, she can look through the folder and take the books she needs.



- Encourage your child to use a calendar to keep track of assignments. Have her list her subjects (reading, math, social studies, science) on each weekday and write in homework and projects. Crossing off completed items will give her a sense of accomplishment.



Playing a supporting role

To get the most out of homework, your youngster needs to do it himself. If you provide too many answers, teachers won’t know where your child needs help. But you can offer the support he needs. Try these ideas:

- Go over the instructions. Have your youngster explain the directions to you before he begins so you can make sure he understands them.
- If he gets stuck, ask questions that will lead him to an answer. For instance, if he asks, “Where was George Washington born?” you might say, “Let’s read the chapter headings together and see if you can find out.” For an essay assignment, have him talk his ideas over with you before he starts writing.
- Review homework after your child finishes, and check to make sure his work is neat and complete. If he does his homework in after-school child care or with a sitter, set aside a time to go over it later.
- Help your youngster set priorities. You might encourage him to do his hardest assignments first, when he is most focused. If he has a spelling quiz Friday, have him review his words each day and allow extra study time Thursday.



