

## **Why kids don't need homework - By Justin Coulson**

[Homework](#) is seen by many parents as being essential for children's scholastic development. But there seems to be more well researched arguments against homework for students under the age of 14 than there are for it.

Is homework as useful as we like to think?

### **No science backs up homework benefits**

For young children (under 14-15 years) there is absolutely no scientific research which supports the inclusion of homework in their [extra-curricular activities](#). Indeed, "there is no evidence that any amount of homework improves the academic performance of primary school students", according to psychologist **Harris Cooper**, PhD, one of the most respected homework researchers in the world. Cooper indicates that while he is personally pro-homework, there appears to be no academic advantage for children to do homework. In many studies the relationship between [homework](#) and "learning" (often defined as grades or [standardised test scores](#)) is negative.

### **Homework creates stress for children**

It might be tough for teachers, but it may be even tougher for children, even when only in small amounts. After a full day of class work, children might find their learning enhanced if they could truly call it a day when they get home, rather than re-opening the books and doing more.

Research has demonstrated that it "overwhelms [struggling kids](#) and removes joy for [high achievers](#)." A 2002 study found a direct relationship between time spent on homework and levels of [anxiety](#), depression, anger, and other mood disorders and issues.

### **Homework creates an extra burden on parents**

Many families find that homework occupies a significant component of their afternoons. An education involves more than just schoolwork. Extra-curricular activities provide teaching opportunities for children as well as the chance to develop other skills, talents, and intelligence. Homework impinges on the possibility parents have to expose their children to activities such as [music lessons](#), cycling, swimming, church activities, and more.

Additionally, kids enjoy being kids - swimming in the pool, playing with friends, having free reading time, going shopping, [contributing to the home with chores](#) and cooking, and so on.

### **Homework is not inspiring**

Homework may be the most reliable extinguisher of the [flame of curiosity](#).

Homework, according to the best research available, neither enhances children's depth of understanding, nor does it increase their [passion for learning](#). If children understand the work at school, mindlessly repeating it at home may not have any useful impact. And if they have not understood the work at school, then repeating it at home may only make things worse.

And as indicated above, some research actually indicates that the provision of homework actually impacts negatively on some [standardised testing](#).

### **Kids can learn the habits when they NEED them**

There is no evidence to support the belief that homework helps students develop the characteristics it is often suggested will be useful, such as ability to organise time, develop good work habits, think independently, and so on. It doesn't seem to prepare them for "later" either. Children have demonstrated that they can usually adapt pretty well when they turn 14 or 15 without having eight years of practice under their belt before it all starts.

Indeed, if we were to run with the 'better get used to it' logic, there would be little point raising children with love because sooner or later life in the real world will not be loving. Hence they'd better get used to it. Obviously this is absurd, but hopefully it illustrates my point.

### **Homework may have a negative impact on learning**

**Harris Cooper**, PhD, has stated: "Most of what homework is doing is driving kids away from learning."

So, this afternoon, let the kids play. Wrestle with them, cook with them, READ with them, sing with them. Play Monopoly if you can't bear to see them not doing some

kind of maths. Teach them checkers or chess, or how to play [Mary had a Little Lamb](#) on the keyboard or recorder. Take time to enjoy them rather than confining them to their room to do homework. They'll learn more in 20 minutes with you than in an hour revising homework sheets.

More useful reading about homework:

- “The Homework Myth: Why our Kids Get Too Much of A Bad Thing” by Alfie Kohn.
- “The Case Against Homework: How Homework is Hurting Children and What Parents Can Do About it” by Sara Bennett and Nancy Kalish.
- “The End of Homework: How Homework Disrupts Families, Overburdens Children, and Limits Learning” by John Buell and Etta Kralovec