### Is Homework Beneficial?

Introduction :

From [dioramas](https://www.britannica.com/art/diorama) to book reports, from [algebraic](https://www.britannica.com/science/algebra) word problems to research projects, whether students should be given homework, as well as the type and amount of homework, has been debated for over a century. [[1](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#1)]

While we are unsure who invented homework, we do know that the word “homework” dates back to ancient Rome. [Pliny the Younger](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pliny-the-Younger) asked his followers to practice their speeches at home. Memorization exercises as homework continued through the Middle Ages and Enlightenment by monks and other scholars. [[45](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#45)]

In the 19th century, German students of the Volksschulen or “People’s Schools” were given assignments to complete outside of the school day. This concept of homework quickly spread across Europe and was brought to the United States by [Horace Mann](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Horace-Mann), who encountered the idea in Prussia. [[45](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#45)

In the early 1900s, progressive education theorists, championed by the magazine [Ladies’ Home Journal](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ladies-Home-Journal), decried homework’s negative impact on children’s physical and mental health, leading California to ban homework for students under 15 from 1901 until 1917. In the 1930s, homework was portrayed as child labor, which was newly illegal, but the prevailing argument was that kids needed time to do household chores. [[1](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#1)] [[2](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#2)] [[45](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#45)] [[46](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#46)]

Public opinion swayed again in favor of homework in the 1950s due to concerns about keeping up with the Soviet Union’s technological advances during the [Cold War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Cold-War). And, in 1986, the US government included homework as an educational quality boosting tool. [[3](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#3)] [[45](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#45)]

A 2014 study found kindergarteners to fifth graders averaged 2.9 hours of homework per week, sixth to eighth graders 3.2 hours per teacher, and ninth to twelfth graders 3.5 hours per teacher. A 2014-2019 study found that teens spent about an hour a day on homework.

Beginning in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic complicated the very idea of homework as students were schooling remotely and many were doing all school work from home. Washington Post journalist Valerie Strauss asked, “Does homework work when kids are learning all day at home?” While students were mostly back in school buildings in fall 2021, the question remains of how effective homework is as an educational tool.

Pro 1

**Homework improves student achievement.**

Studies have shown that homework improved student achievement in terms of improved grades, test results, and the likelihood to attend college.

Research published in the High School Journal indicated that students who spent between 31 and 90 minutes each day on homework “scored about 40 points higher on the SAT-Mathematics subtest than their peers, who reported spending no time on homework each day, on average.” [[6](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#6)]

Students in classes that were assigned homework outperformed 69% of students who didn’t have homework on both [standardized tests](https://standardizedtests.procon.org/) and grades. A majority of studies on homework’s impact – 64% in one meta-study and 72% in another – showed that take-home assignments were effective at improving academic achievement.

Research by the Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA) concluded that increased homework led to better GPAs and higher probability of college attendance for high school boys. In fact, boys who attended college did more than three hours of additional homework per week in high school. [[10](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#10)]

### Pro 2

#### Homework helps to reinforce classroom learning, while developing good study habits and life skills.

Students typically retain only 50% of the information teachers provide in class, and they need to apply that information in order to truly learn it. Abby Freireich and Brian Platzer, co-founders of Teachers Who Tutor NYC, explained, “at-home assignments help students learn the material taught in class. Students require independent practice to internalize new concepts… [And] these assignments can provide valuable data for teachers about how well students understand the curriculum.” [[11](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#11)] [[49](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#49)]

Elementary school students who were taught “strategies to organize and complete homework,” such as prioritizing homework activities, collecting study materials, note-taking, and following directions, showed increased grades and more positive comments on report cards. [[17](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#17)]

Research by the City University of New York noted that “students who engage in self-regulatory processes while completing homework,” such as goal-setting, time management, and remaining focused, “are generally more motivated and are higher achievers than those who do not use these processes.” [[18](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#18)]

Homework also helps students develop key skills that they’ll use throughout their lives: accountability, autonomy, discipline, time management, self-direction, critical thinking, and independent problem-solving. Freireich and Platzer noted that “homework helps students acquire the skills needed to plan, organize, and complete their work.” [[12](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#12)] [[13](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#13)] [[14](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#14)] [[15](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#15)] [[49](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#49)]

### Pro 3

#### Homework allows parents to be involved with children’s learning.

Thanks to take-home assignments, parents are able to track what their children are learning at school as well as their academic strengths and weaknesses. [[12](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#12)]

Data from a nationwide sample of elementary school students show that parental involvement in homework can improve class performance, especially among economically disadvantaged African-American and Hispanic students. [[20](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#20)]

Research from Johns Hopkins University found that an interactive homework process known as TIPS (Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork) improves student achievement: “Students in the TIPS group earned significantly higher report card grades after 18 weeks (1 TIPS assignment per week) than did non-TIPS students.” [[21](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#21)]

Homework can also help clue parents in to the existence of any learning disabilities their children may have, allowing them to get help and adjust learning strategies as needed. Duke University Professor Harris Cooper noted, “Two parents once told me they refused to believe their child had a learning disability until homework revealed it to them.” [[12](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#12)]

Con 1

**Too much homework can be harmful.**

A poll of California high school students found that 59% thought they had too much homework. 82% of respondents said that they were “often or always stressed by schoolwork.” High-achieving high school students said too much homework leads to sleep deprivation and other health problems such as headaches, exhaustion, weight loss, and stomach problems. [[24](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#24)] [[28](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#28)][[29](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/%22%20%5Cl%20%2229)]

Alfie Kohn, an education and parenting expert, said, “Kids should have a chance to just be kids… it’s absurd to insist that children must be engaged in constructive activities right up until their heads hit the pillow.” [[27](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#27)]

Emmy Kang, a mental health counselor, explained, “More than half of students say that homework is their primary source of stress, and we know what stress can do on our bodies.” [[48](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#48)]

Excessive homework can also lead to cheating: 90% of middle school students and 67% of high school students admit to copying someone else’s homework, and 43% of college students engaged in “unauthorized collaboration” on out-of-class assignments. Even parents take shortcuts on homework: 43% of those surveyed admitted to having completed a child’s assignment for them. [[30](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#30)] [[31](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#31)] [[32](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#32)]

Con 2

**Homework exacerbates the digital divide or homework gap.**

Kiara Taylor, financial expert, defined the digital divide as “the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology and those that don’t. Though the term now encompasses the technical and financial ability to utilize available technology—along with access (or a lack of access) to the Internet—the gap it refers to is constantly shifting with the development of technology.” For students, this is often called the homework gap. [[50](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#50)] [[51](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#51)]

30% (about 15 to 16 million) public school students either did not have an adequate internet connection or an appropriate device, or both, for distance learning. Completing homework for these students is more complicated (having to find a safe place with an internet connection, or borrowing a laptop, for example) or impossible. [[51](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#51)]

A Hispanic Heritage Foundation study found that 96.5% of students across the country needed to use the internet for homework, and nearly half reported they were sometimes unable to complete their homework due to lack of access to the internet or a computer, which often resulted in lower grades. [[37](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#37)] [[38](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#38)]

One study concluded that homework increases social inequality because it “potentially serves as a mechanism to further advantage those students who already experience some privilege in the school system while further disadvantaging those who may already be in a marginalized position.” [[39](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#39)]

Con 3

**Homework does not help younger students, and may not help high school students.**

We’ve known for a while that homework does not help elementary students. A 2006 study found that “homework had no association with achievement gains” when measured by [standardized tests](https://standardizedtests.procon.org/) results or grades. [[7](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#7)]

Fourth grade students who did no homework got roughly the same score on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) math exam as those who did 30 minutes of homework a night. Students who did 45 minutes or more of homework a night actually did worse. [[41](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#41)]

Temple University professor Kathryn Hirsh-Pasek said that homework is not the most effective tool for young learners to apply new information: “They’re learning way more important skills when they’re not doing their homework.” [[42](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#42)]

In fact, homework may not be helpful at the high school level either. Alfie Kohn, author of The Homework Myth, stated, “I interviewed high school teachers who completely stopped giving homework and there was no downside, it was all upside.” He explains, “just because the same kids who get more homework do a little better on tests, doesn’t mean the homework made that happen.” [[52](https://www.procon.org/headlines/homework-pros-cons-procon-org/#52)]