

Tame the Homework Beast

September means the return of math problems, science projects and English essays. Help your kids overcome the common setbacks below.

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I'll just watch one more thing on YouTube...

Even more than TV and video games, experts say that Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and other online and social media are now the biggest distractions for kids. But, of course, students need their computers to complete school assignments, and researching online can quickly slide into watching endless music videos and surfing Facebook. The solution: Download SelfControl (free; selfcontrolapp.com), a computer app for Macs that blocks the websites you select for a set period of time. For phones, try the Forest app (99¢; forestapp.cc), which prevents your kid from using apps while a tree "grows" on the screen for a set time—say, 30 minutes—before it unlocks.

It's late! I'm tired and cranky.

By the time your procrastinator sits down to work, she'll be pooped, and homework may take even longer. Establish a firm rule that fits with your family, such as homework begins 30 minutes after arriving home. Some experts say novelty can boost attention, so suggest she not study in the same room every night. Working quietly in a common area with others around may also help her feel accountable.

There's no way I can finish this!

If your child seems overwhelmed by an intimidatingly large assignment, help her break it down into parts, and pick one thing to focus on first. Experts advise keeping your tone about homework positive. When you try to empathize ("Mrs. Leonard gave you that much in one night? That's crazy!"), your kid may take it as a form of permission to procrastinate, or skip the work altogether.



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SOURCES: Harris Cooper, professor of psychology, Duke University, and author, *The Battle Over Homework*. Ann Dolin, president, Educational Connections, Inc., and author, *Homework Made Simple*.

