



## Why is homework important?

Homework that matches state academic standards can help students build the skills and knowledge they need to succeed. Homework that does not match state standards does not help students develop essential skills. You can learn how to tell the difference.

## This guide helps parents...

- Locate the state's academic standards
- Compare homework assignments with the standards
- Ask questions about homework assignments
- Get help when homework seems meaningless, too difficult, or too easy



## ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST

The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students at all levels—pre-kindergarten through college. We work alongside educators, parents, policymakers, and community and business leaders across the country to help transform schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Lessons learned in these efforts, together with unflinching data analyses, shape our state and national policy agendas. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people—especially those who are black, Latino, American Indian, or from low-income families—to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.

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The Education Trust

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# A GUIDE TO HOMEWORK

for Parents to Help  
Their Children Succeed



The Education Trust



### WHAT ARE STATE ACADEMIC STANDARDS?

All states have K-12 standards that identify what students should know, understand, or be able to do in each subject. These standards identify what teachers should teach and what students should learn.

#### States produce standards in one of two ways:

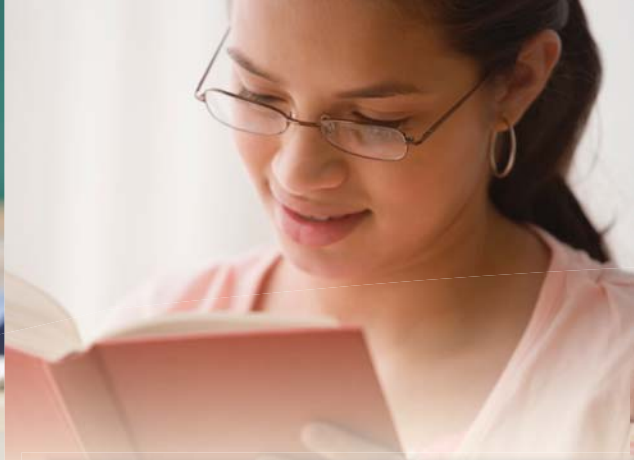
“Grade-by-grade standards” are for each grade level. For example, your state may have specific standards for third, fourth, and fifth grades. **OR** “Grade-span standards” group grades together. For example, your state may have elementary school standards (K-5), middle school standards (grades 6-8), and high school standards (grades 9-12).

### WHAT DO STANDARDS HAVE TO DO WITH MY CHILD’S HOMEWORK?

Each state academic standard guides educators as they plan lessons, activities, and tests. Homework assignments help students practice the skills they’ve learned at school. Research tells us that students who have regular, meaningful homework learn more than students who do not. Every in-class assignment and every homework assignment should help students meet the state standards.

### WHERE DO I FIND THE STATE STANDARDS?

Your child’s school should have copies of the state standards. You can also search the Internet for “(your state) academic standards.”



## FOUR THINGS PARENTS CAN DO

### Read the Standards

Read the standards that apply to your child’s grade level in each subject—mathematics, English/Language Arts, science, and social studies.

Becoming familiar with the state standards will allow you to see whether classroom and homework assignments match these standards. When you are familiar with the standards, you may feel more comfortable reviewing your child’s homework.

### Review the Homework and Compare It With the Standards

Ask, “Is there a standard that matches this assignment?” You should be able to find a standard that matches a skill your child must use to complete the assignment.

### List Your Questions About the Homework

- Can you match each homework assignment to at least one of the standards for your child’s grade level?
- Can your child clearly explain the purpose of each assignment? Can you?
- Can you discuss the standards with your child? Can you identify the skills your child will need to complete the homework assignment?
- Make a note of all questions you have regarding the assignments. If the homework and the standards do not seem to match, make an appointment to speak with the teacher.

### Ask the Teacher Questions About the Homework

Teachers should always know the purpose of an assignment and the standard it is intended to meet. You should expect your child’s homework to help him or her meet the state’s standards.

### When speaking with teachers about homework, ask the following questions:

- ▶ Which of the state’s standards does the homework aim to address?
- ▶ How will completing the homework assignment help my child meet the standards?
- ▶ What skills will my child need to call on to complete this homework?
- ▶ Does my child need extra help? What support is available?

### Some tips:

- ▶ Regularly compare your child’s homework with the state’s standards.
- ▶ Use the standards often. The better you understand the standards, the more comfortable you’ll feel speaking with teachers and school officials about your child’s progress.
- ▶ Speak to your child’s teacher if you regularly see a mismatch between the homework and the standards.
- ▶ If there are frequent mismatches or if you feel more confident working as part of a group, reach out to other parents and ask them to work with you to match homework with standards and to raise concerns.



**BECOME AN INVOLVED PARENT. YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR CHILD.**