

Ten Time-Management Tips

“I forgot it.”

“I thought it was for tomorrow.”

“I left it at home.”

Yes, we’re talking about homework. Some students are lazy. Others are careless. Still others are forgetful. But when these excuses happen on a regular basis, the students may lack strong time-management skills. They’re probably just as frustrated as you are with their inability to complete homework on time.

Learning and teaching time management can be a slow and painful process but worth it. Taking responsibility for managing our time and obligations is part of character education. Here are ten tips to help you and your students manage time responsibly:

- 1. Dedicate class time to homework assignments.** Hurriedly shouting out the assignment as the bell rings sends the message that homework is an after-thought. Set aside five minutes at the end of the lesson to explain the task and due date. Allow time for students to ask questions and clarify your expectations.
- 2. Use homework diaries.** Distribute a diary or have students use their agendas to record each assignment. This is most effective when all classes and teachers adhere to this policy. If your school allows it, let the students store the information in their cellphones (they’re more likely to look at them as soon as they get home).
- 3. Respect their homework.** If you don’t give your students constructive and thoughtful feedback on their work, they won’t value doing it. Set yourself standards for what to write on the assignments. Make sure the criticism and/or praise is constructive. Note which students are having difficulty with the subject or getting the work done.
- 4. Keep records.** Be sure they’re consistent and contain more than just a grade. Track your students’ progress and problems in a homework diary. Use it to direct your teaching and approach to problem students.
- 5. Use rubrics.** Ones that describe what students must do to achieve each grade help them understand what they must do to attain each grade. They can pinpoint what they need to work on if they’re getting low grades on assignments. Peer rubrics encourage assignments to be completed on time. Honest and fair grading by peers should be discussed prior to using peer rubrics to strengthen their effectiveness.

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- 6. Give group assignments.** Again, peer support is a strong motivator when you group students to complete assignments. It also plays on the strengths of each student because it allows individuals to bring their specific skill-sets to achieve the group result.
- 7. Present time management to the class.** Distribute time-management worksheets to the class and discuss what it means in the context of school and, by extension, character. Tell them everyone has responsibilities and outline what they are, including yours. Show them how to take responsibility for managing their time by writing tasks down when they receive homework assignments. Have them think about the challenges and work requirements of the tasks and calculate how much time each assignment will take. In a perfect world, we would all be able to dedicate time to fulfilling our responsibilities, but sometimes things come up. Recognize this by helping them figure out how to manage disruptions that impede their ability to complete work on time.
- 8. Hold one-on-one time for trouble-shooting.** If students are still having problems, talk to them individually. You might have to set more manageable goals with them. Continue to use all the tools at your disposal to get your students on track.
- 9. Praise them.** When students hand in work on time and completed, make sure you recognize it.
- 10. Publish their work.** When students see that their work has meaning beyond the context of the classroom lesson (submitting it for publication, giving class presentations, or simply hanging it on the wall), they'll more likely take pride in the assignment. It gives the end-product meaning.

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