

## Homework (Secondary)

Moderate impact for very low or no cost, based on moderate evidence.



+5

Homework refers to tasks given to pupils by their teachers to be completed outside of usual lessons. Common homework activities may be reading or preparing for work to be done in class, or practising and completing tasks or activities already taught or started in lessons, but it may include more extended activities to develop inquiry skills or more directed and focused work such as revision for exams.

### How effective is it?

On average, the impact of homework on learning is consistently positive (leading to on average five months' additional progress). However, beneath this average there is a wide variation in potential impact, suggesting that how homework is set is likely to be very important.

There is some evidence that homework is most effective when used as a short and focused intervention (e.g. in the form of a project or specific target connected with a particular element of learning) with some exceptional studies showing up to eight months' positive impact on attainment. Benefits are likely to be more modest, up to two to three months' progress on average, if homework is more routinely set (e.g. learning vocabulary or completing problem sheets in mathematics every day).

Evidence also suggests that how homework relates to learning during normal school time is important. In the most effective examples homework was an integral part of learning, rather than an add-on. To maximise impact, it is also appears to be important that students are provided with high quality feedback on their work (see [Feedback](#)).

Studies imply that there is an optimum amount of homework of between 1 and 2 hours per school day (slightly longer for older pupils), with effects diminishing as the time that students spend on homework increases.

### How secure is the evidence?

Homework has been extensively studied. However, studies have mainly looked at the correlation between homework and how well schools perform. It is certainly the case that schools whose pupils do homework tend to perform well, but it is less clear that the homework is the reason why they are successful.

There are a smaller number of studies which have investigated what happens when homework is introduced and compared with classes where homework is not given. These studies tend to show that homework is beneficial, though the evidence is less secure.

### What are the costs?

There are few costs associated with homework, though there are implications for staff time for preparation and marking. With younger children there may be additional resources required (such as reading books or games for children to take home). Overall costs are estimated as very low.

## What should I consider?

*Before you implement this strategy in your learning environment, consider the following:*

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1. Planned and focused activities are more beneficial than homework which is more regular but may be routine or not linked with what is being learned in class.
2. It should not be used as a punishment or penalty for poor performance.
3. A variety of tasks with different levels of challenge is likely to be beneficial.
4. The quality of homework is more important than the quantity. Pupils should receive specific and timely feedback on homework.
5. Have you made the purpose of homework clear to children (e.g. to increase a specific area of knowledge, or fluency in a particular area)?