

## New Year - New Semester - New Homework Solutions

By Susan Kruger As students begin a new semester, this is the perfect time to establish some new routines to improve the process of doing homework. The first question to ask yourself is, "If there is one thing I could improve about homework, what would it be?" The first answer that probably came to mind was, "Get rid of it!" Honestly, that would be my first response, too. However, homework is a fact-of-life and serves a very good purpose (whether we like it or not), so let's try that again... \*\* If You Could Improve One Thing about Homework, What Would It Be? \*\* - Perhaps you feel that you (or your child) take too much time to do homework. - Or, maybe homework causes a lot of arguments in your home and you would like to experience some peace. - Is your teacher complaining that lost assignments are dragging down your grade? - Do your parents often complain that you wait for the "last minute" to tell them about important things, such as the supplies you need for that science fair project...tomorrow?! \*\* Action Plan \*\* Now that you know the problem, create a solution! Once you have recognized a specific problem, it is much easier to identify a solution. The best solutions are systems; procedures or routines that help you simplify the issue and develop positive habits to overcome it. I could write a full chapter on each of the problems above, but here are some quick examples of "solution systems" for each one: - If you fight to stay focused while doing homework, set an electronic timer for the amount of time you think an assignment should take and challenge yourself to beat the timer. - If lost assignments are your issue, you may first need to reduce the number of folders that you (or your child) have to manage. Most students juggle 7-9 separate folders and 7-9 notebooks... up to 18 different supplies! No wonder assignments get lost! Start by streamlining all folders into one, 1" binder. Then, "Take Ten" every time you sit down to do your homework; two minutes to put all loose papers into their correct folders and the next eight minutes to review any handouts or notes from the day. - If you are a victim of "Last Minute Syndrome," one strategy that will help you is the Weekly Family Meeting. This meeting is an informal gathering (usually on Sundays) where everyone shares their schedules for the upcoming week (including parents). Discuss sports schedules, upcoming tests/projects (and needed supplies), etc. Parents also share if they will be working late one night or have other after-school obligations that may impact the family. This system is a great cure for LMS because it encourages everyone to be proactive and plan ahead together. (BONUS: This strategy actually shows children \*how\* to plan ahead.) These suggestions are merely examples, but they illustrate the concept of developing \*systems\* to help solve common homework problems. Tip for Parents: Whenever possible, involve your children in the search for solutions. Children of all ages usually give honest and very insightful suggestions, especially when they feel like their input is taken seriously. The more input they can have in identifying reasonable solutions, the more willing they will be to participate. \*\* In Conclusion \*\* Homework inherently causes problems. In fact, one of the most significant purposes of homework is to learn \*how\* to solve problems. In almost every situation, a "recurring problem" can be solved with a "recurring solution," better known as a "system." To create your solution system: 1) Identify and label the problem so you can truly focus on a solution. 2) Brainstorm solutions that will simplify the problem and help everyone develop habits to overcome them. 3) Test your system. Be prepared to make adjustments and give it two-four weeks for it to take hold. 4) Recognize the fruits of your efforts! This is the best motivation for solving future problems.

## About the Author

Susan Kruger is the author of SOAR Study Skills; A Simple and Efficient System for Earning Better Grades in Less Time. Get Susan's FREE Homework Rx Toolkit, featuring 25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight!, at her website: <http://soarstudyskills.com>.

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