

IDEAS TO INCREASE MOTIVATION FOR HOMEWORK

From Dr Carla Humphrys

Some students can find it hard to complete their work, whether it's at school or in class. The idea of it being something that you "have to" instead of "want to" do is so unmotivating, especially if it's something you have to complete at home after a long day at school!

Feeling unmotivated to work on assignments often means that they are left to the last minute. This increases stress levels as it reduces the time available to work on it and can cause adults to nag you about it.

It would be great if there was a magic wand that you could wave to automatically give you motivation. But there isn't!

Below are some tips that others have found helpful, to just get them started. Motivation will often follow if we can find a way to take that first step.

1. MAKE IT EASIER TO GET STARTED BY SETTING UP YOUR AREA.

As soon as you get home (or arrive in class or study line), get everything that you need out, open and ready. Even if you go and have a break (if you're at home) before you actually start, make getting ready to work the first thing that you do.

2. START WITH SOMETHING YOU LIKE LESS.

Tell yourself you are going to do just ten minutes of the less liked activity. Whatever happens, make yourself do ten minutes and then you can switch to a different task if you like. This is tricky but does help!

3. USE A CLOCK TO TIME SHORT BLOCKS OF WORK.

Say to yourself, okay I will start this English essay and just do 15 minutes worth before I am allowed to stop.

Keep an eye on the time and coach yourself through it every time you get distracted – "okay, only 11 minutes to go and then I can have a break ...okay 7 minutes to go and then I can stop... come on three more minutes, keep going". Be your own coach through this.

If you find yourself "on a roll" and want to keep going after the 15 minutes are up, then do it! However, make a deal that you must do at least 15 minutes on it.

*Try not to use a device that will distract you as a timer though.

4. USE MUSIC AS A REINFORCER BY USING AN "ON/OFF" METHOD OF LISTENING.

A lot of people say they study better with music, but it can also be used as a powerful reinforcer. Try listening to music for 15 minutes and then turn it off for 15 minutes, and repeat.

You can make a deal with yourself that you HAVE to do ten more minutes of work before you can listen to music or something like that. Small changes in process will be helpful with increasing motivation (just that little bit).

5. REWARD YOURSELF (AFTER DOING THE WORK).

Find a heap of counters/beads and get a jar to put them in. Give yourself one counter after every half an hour of good solid work. Make it that once you have got X numbers of counters then you can get something new that you have been wanting (and can afford to buy yourself).

OR

Set yourself the task of studying for a set amount of time then allow yourself a reward of watching an episode of your favourite show.

6. HAVE FOCUS DAYS.

Pick days in which you really work hard on one specific subject. For example, you might choose to focus on Maths on a Monday, Media on a Tuesday and English on Wednesday.

7. VARIETY IS THE 'SPICE OF LIFE'.

Be creative in your study habits. Try varying the order or way in which you do things to keep it a bit more interesting.

8. WAIT!

Write down what you would rather do and plan a time to do it later. Train yourself to wait, starting as low as 30 seconds if needed, then 60 seconds, then longer and longer before you stop homework to do what you want.

9. SET GOALS.

a. Short term "task" goals

Set a goal for how much you will complete in the next 10-15 minutes. It could be completing a certain number of questions, telling yourself you will do two paragraphs before dinner, or 3 items before getting a drink etc. Keep setting little goals all the time, rather than just one large goal only once.

b. Short term "grade" goals

Every time you have an assignment, set yourself a specific goal for the grade you want to get. Write it down and put it somewhere that you can see it.

c. Medium term goals

Set a goal for the grade you want to get for each subject this term and look at them often. Write them up around your room and in your diary.

This is a long list and might be a bit overwhelming. Some tips can be used at home and in class, while others are easier at home. Start small by picking any one of these suggestions and try it today. Tomorrow you can try another one!

If you are still struggling after trying these tips, please reach out to your parents, teacher, Year Level Manager or a member of the Wellbeing Team.