

Homework Toolkit X

A Quick Resource for Students & Parents



SOAR
STUDY SKILLS

by Susan Kruger, M.Ed.

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Homework Rx[®] Toolkit

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Introduction

Welcome to SOAR® Study Skills. This Homework Rx® Toolkit has been provided as a resource to help parents and students improve the process of managing homework and preparing for school.

parents...

If you are a parent who finds that homework takes a lot of time and creates a lot of frustration in your home, or perhaps you simply feel that your child should be able to work more efficiently, the Homework Rx® Toolkit will be a great resource for you!

The *Study Skills Scorecard* and the list of *25 Ways to Make Homework Easier... Tonight!* are both provided as a communication tool for you to share with your child. The strategies are very quick and simple, but yield positive results. The purpose is to help your child discover for himself that the use of strategy makes a big difference.

Normally, SOAR® does not advocate the use of a "list of tips" (we prefer to teach a *system* of integrated strategies), but we know from years of experience that the process of learning study skills begins by trying a few simple steps to experience the power of being strategic. When students experience the positive impact of making simple changes, they will automatically be motivated to try more!

Encourage your child to select 2-3 strategies from the *25 Ways* list and give them a try. They can begin with one that sounds "easiest" or one that makes them think, "Oh, that's a good idea!" They can also use the *Study Skills Scorecard* to identify specific areas of focus for them.

The *Homework Inventory for Parents* allows you to identify the areas of concern that are specific to YOU. In the next few weeks, you will receive eight short articles that will address each group of problems, share insights into the root cause of the problems, and provide helpful tips and hints to make positive changes.

students...

If you are a student who wishes that there was a better, easier, and faster way to do homework and study for school, you have come to the right place! You will find the list of ***25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight!*** very helpful. Start by using the ***Study Skills Scorecard*** to identify the strategies that are best for you.

teachers...

If you are a teacher, please visit www.StudySkills.com to sign up to receive our Teacher Toolkit.

Homework Scorecard

Are there some study skills that can be helpful for you or your child? To find out, print this scorecard and answer the questions below by writing “yes” or “no” in the blank spaces before each question. When you are finished, you can analyze your score on page 7.

have you ever...

- _____ 1. Felt “dumb” or “stupid” because of difficulties in school?
- _____ 2. Felt like you do not have many talents?
- _____ 3. Felt like homework takes longer than it should?
- _____ 4. Wanted to earn better grades while still having time for extra-curricular activities and socializing?
- _____ 5. Forgotten to do a homework assignment?
- _____ 6. Forgotten certain books, notebooks, or folders at school that you needed for homework?
- _____ 7. Been annoyed as your parents ‘nagged’ you about homework or studying?
- _____ 8. Brought the wrong folder or notebook to class?
- _____ 9. Misplaced a homework assignment that you knew you did?
- _____ 10. Looked inside your bag or locker to find a sea of randomly stashed papers staring back at you?
- _____ 11. Had a hard time keeping your room neat and organized?
- _____ 12. Felt rushed or frustrated getting ready for school in the morning?

Homework Scorecard Continued

- _____ 13. Been unsure of how to ask questions in class or talk to your teacher?
- _____ 14. Had a hard time remembering information when you read a textbook?
- _____ 15. Felt completely overwhelmed when you have had to write a paper?
- _____ 16. Thought “There must be a better way to prepare for tests!”?
- _____ 17. Studied hard for a test, only to be disappointed with your score?
- _____ 18. Been shocked, and occasionally disappointed, by the grades on your report card?
- _____ 19. Had good intentions of doing well in school, but lost track of your goals?
- _____ 20. Learned a few “study skills,” but did not know how or when to use them?

Turn to page 7 to discover how the answers on this scorecard can help you find the study tips and strategies that will make homework easier –and faster– for you!

Evaluate Your Scorecard

If you answered “no” to all of the questions on the previous page, then you are a star student who: gets homework done *quickly*, earns *great* grades on tests, and has all papers *organized* so that every assignment is turned on time.

If, however, you answered “yes” to ANY of the Scorecard questions, you are not alone! Nearly every student can afford to learn a few things about how to make homework easier. (After all, *most* students are never taught how to do homework and study efficiently.) If you answered “yes” to questions #:

- **1 or 2**... you might be surprised to learn that most problems students experience in school are related to simply not knowing *how* to study.

homework Rx[®]:

- Take a close look at all of the tips in “25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight!” on page 10 of this Toolkit. Choose two and try them today!
- Take our “How Are You Smart?” section in the [SOAR[®] Study Skills Program](#) to learn more about your unique sets of intelligence and how you can build on those to achieve school success.

- **3, 4, 5, 6, or 7**... then you need to learn how to set goals and manage your time so you can get your homework done in a flash *without* sacrificing good grades.

homework Rx[®]:

- Many of the tips in the “25 Ways...” guide will be helpful for you, especially #s: 1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21. Highlight these tips and try two today.
- The “Set goals” section of [SOAR[®] Study Skills Program](#) is a simple, systematic way to set goals for yourself and/or with your family. You will also learn an easy routine to help you manage your time so you can have better grades AND more time for fun!

Evaluate Your Scorecard Continued

- **8, 9, 10, 11, or 12...** then you could use some help with organization. Don't fret, though... You can *learn* how to get organized easily and painlessly.

homework Rx[®]:

- Take a closer look at tip #s 2, 10, 22, 23, 24, and 25 in the "25 Ways..." guide that begins on page 10 of this Toolkit.
- With the "Organize" section of the [SOAR[®] Study Skills Program](#), you will be amazed at how easy it is to get organized; your papers, book bag, locker, and even your bedroom can be whipped into shape –and *kept* in shape- with our simple system.

- **13, 14, 15, 16, or 17...** then you can use some help with the nitty-gritty stuff like studying for and taking tests, reading textbooks, writing papers, and working with teachers.

homework Rx[®]:

- Tip #s 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 14, and 17 of the "25 Ways..." guide in the Toolkit provide helpful study suggestions.
- The "Ask questions" section of the [SOAR[®] Study Skills Program](#) will show you how asking questions is a simple strategy for: working with teachers, reading textbooks, preparing for tests, and taking tests. This section is easy to learn, easy to use, and is VERY effective.

- **18, 19, or 20...** then you need to learn how to keep track of your grades and your goals. You also need help getting started with a homework plan that will work for **you**.

homework Rx[®]:

- You will find the best resource for these problems is the "Record your progress" section of the [SOAR[®] Study Skills Program](#). Here, you will find

Evaluate Your Scorecard Continued

helpful tips for improving your grades by tracking them, integrating all of the study skills you know (and may learn) while keeping focused on your goals, and tips for getting started.

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On the next page, you will find our helpful homework guide, “25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight!” We encourage you to read all of the strategies, but pay particular attention to the ones best suited for you, according to your Homework Scorecard.

25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight!!

If you are like most people, chances are good that homework is not anywhere near the top on your list of favorite things to do! One major reason that homework can be such a drag is that most people are never actually taught *how* to learn and study.

The ideas that follow are just a few things you can do to make homework easier. Start by choosing two or three strategies to try, using the *Study Skills* Scorecard to help you identify the best tips for you. Not every tip will work for *everybody*, but you will be amazed at how quickly a few simple strategies can make a big difference for you!

1. **Do the most important things first.** The hours between 3 PM and 6 PM are usually the most wasted hours of the day. Challenge yourself to make them the most productive hours by doing your homework with-in one hour of arriving home. Then, you can have a full evening of free-time for yourself.
2. **When you first sit down to do your homework, take 2 minutes to put loose papers into the proper folders.** Make this a part of your daily routine so you can save valuable time (instead of searching for lost assignments) and avoid losing points on missing work.
3. **Use the next 8 minutes to reread any notes you took in school earlier that day.** Reviewing your notes for a few minutes everyday saves hours of studying when test-time comes around.
4. **As you read your notes, underline or *star* any content that you do not understand.** Ask your teacher for clarification about it the next day. Teachers love these questions because they indicate that you care about your school work. A few good questions can earn you a lot of respect from your teachers.
5. **When reviewing your notes, read them out loud.** Your brain will remember the information in your notes better

25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight! **Continued**

because it will be processing the information in three ways: through your eyes as you read it, your mouth as you say it, and your ears as you hear your own voice.

6. **Create potential test questions out of your notes.** Creating questions helps you learn better than simply reciting or memorizing information because the *process* of creating questions forces you to think about the information at a higher level.
7. **Do you find it hard to sit still?** Get up and walk around while reviewing your notes! Movement improves the circulation to your brain and also helps active people focus better.
8. **Get involved!** It can be difficult to stay motivated if academic work is the only thing you take away from school. Get involved in at least one extra-curricular activity (sports, band, clubs, etc...) to help you develop good friendships and a positive attitude about school.
9. **Remove distractions from your study area.** Turn off your cell phone, put your iPod® away, and do not log on to email until your homework is done. You will get your homework done much faster and then have much *more* time to enjoy these things once your homework is complete.
10. **Fill a bucket or basket with a pair of scissors, set of markers, ruler, calculator, glue, stapler, and several pens and pencils.** Take this container with you wherever you do your homework. With all of your supplies handy, you will not have to run around your home to find things you need and risk getting side-tracked by the TV, video games, computer, phone calls, refrigerator, etc.
11. **Does homework take too long?** Invest in an electronic timer (approx \$7 at most superstores) and set it for the amount of time you think it *should* take you to do each assignment. Challenge yourself to beat the timer.

25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight! **Continued**

12. **As you do your homework, constantly ask yourself, “How can this assignment help me study for the next test?”** This question will help you stay focused on the purpose of your assignment and encourage you to do your best work, while still working to beat your timer! It will also save a lot of study time when it comes time to prepare for a test.
13. **When you come to a question (or group of questions) that you do not understand, skip it!** Why waste a lot of time/energy fretting over a few questions/problems? Move on to the items you can do and then come back to the skipped questions later. Quite often, you will be able to figure out these answers after completing the rest of the assignment.
14. **Keep a bottle of cool water on hand while you study.** Water keeps your body and most importantly, your brain, hydrated.
15. **Move often.** Your circulation slows down and your brain becomes stagnant after you have been sitting still for 40-45 minutes. You will actually be more efficient if you take a short, 1-2 minute break every 40 minutes. Stand up, do some jumping jacks, listen to ONE song on your radio or iPod®, and return to your homework. Do not let yourself turn on your cell phone or watch TV because you will be less likely to return to your homework quickly.
16. **Reward yourself.** It can be hard, even for the most motivated students, to stay disciplined. Determine a reward for yourself every night. For example, “I will get my math and social studies homework done and then I will treat myself to some ice cream.” Or, “If I can get my homework done by 6:00, then I will have time to shoot some hoops with my friends, call a couple of friends, and then watch my favorite TV show at 8:00 PM.”
17. **Make your homework easier tomorrow night by reading the next section of your textbook for each class tonight (or at least read the pictures, captions, and summary questions).** When you read before class, you will

25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight! **Continued**

anticipate more about what is going on in class, which will make it easier to stay focused and understand the topic more quickly.

18. **As soon as you finish a homework assignment, take 12 seconds to put it in the correct folder.** Do not let your homework get left behind at home or even lost in the wrong folder. Put it away immediately and you will save many headaches.
19. **Communicate with your parents and other family members.** Tell them what you plan to do so they can support your plan. The more information you volunteer, the less likely your parents will be to “nag” you with questions.
20. **Use a planner.** Make your life easier by using a planner in school to record your homework and any other things that you have to do. Using a planner will help you complete assignments (and turn them in) on time, reducing lost points on late assignments.
21. **Make the planner easy to use.** Mark your place by using a binder clip as a “bookmark.” A binder clip works better than a paper clip or bookmark because it stays in place and is easy to grab when you are in a hurry.
22. **Check your planner before you go to bed to make sure you took care of everything.** Reviewing your planner at night is a great habit to develop because it ensures that you will be well prepared for school the next day. The more prepared you are, the better day you will have.
23. **Gather all of your folders, books, notebooks, supplies, etc... and put them in your bag before you go to sleep.** Mornings are chaotic and most people are still a bit groggy before they leave for school, so it is very easy to forget important things at home in the morning. Avoid this problem by gathering everything you need the next day *before* you go to bed.

25 Ways to Make Homework Easier...Tonight! **Continued**

24. Lay out your clothes (including coat and shoes) for tomorrow. When you start the day feeling prepared, you will *be* prepared throughout the day.

25. Get sleep. Most students do not get enough sleep. The more rested you are, the more you will be able to enjoy your time in school, pay attention in class, work more efficiently, and ultimately...learn more in less time!

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If you found these tips helpful OR if you are looking for more powerful solutions, check out our full line of products for parents and students at www.StudySkills.com/products/?categ=15.

If you are a parent who has struggled to keep homework time peaceful and productive, we encourage you to take a look at our Homework Inventory for Parents that begins on the next page.

Homework Inventory for *parents*

Many parents feel like there must be something wrong with them -or their child- when they are dealing with homework problems. Nothing could be further from the truth! Homework is a powerful source of friction for most families and, as parents, we are not given a manual to trouble-shoot and solve these challenges.

The comments on the next page reflect some of the most common issues we hear from parents. Please take a moment to review each situation and place a "check" next the one(s) that resonate with you. In the next few weeks, you will receive eight short articles providing insights and solutions for each of these problems.

**See the Homework Inventory for Parents
on the next page...**

homework inventory for parents

Homework Problems	
1.	"He struggles with many school tasks."
2.	"She does not have a lot of confidence."
3.	"Our schedules are crazy! It is hard to make time for homework."
4.	"She saves everything for the last minute!"
5.	"We frequently fight over doing homework."
6.	"I am tired of always having to be in charge."
7.	"It takes her longer than it should to do her homework."
8.	"School papers never make it home."
9.	"She often brings the wrong folders home for homework."
10.	"His book bag is a mess!"
11.	"I saw him do his homework, but his teacher says he did not turn it in!"
12.	"It is very challenging for me to keep track of all of the school papers, sports schedules, lunch menus, etc."
13.	"My child does not remember what he reads in a textbook."
14.	"My child does not pay attention well in class."
15.	"My child does not take good notes."
16.	"My child does not know how to study for tests."
17.	"He's just not motivated!"

Helpful insights and strategies for each of these problems will be sent in a series of short emails over the next two weeks. Stay tuned!

about the author



Susan Kruger, M.Ed. is a certified teacher and reading specialist. She combined her personal struggles as a student with her professional expertise to create a powerful, student-friendly (and family-friendly) system. She has taught her SOAR® Study Skills workshops to hundreds of students with great success!

Susan travels the country training teachers in study skills/language arts learning and lends her talents as a consultant for a major textbook company while she continues to help students and their families achieve success in school and peace in the household.

When she is not “working,” Susan enjoys the company of her son, daughter, husband (a fellow educator), and her large extended family.

more resources

To learn more about Susan and SOAR® Study Skills, visit www.StudySkills.com.