

Why Do Homework?

If you want to play on the baseball team, you have to practice. If you want to be a successful dancer, you need to practice. We all enjoy watching an accomplished musician perform, but none of us can master the instrument simply by watching or listening to the musician. It takes practice to master a sport, a video game, a musical instrument, or anything worthwhile. The same is true in learning mathematics. Much of the practice required in mastering mathematics occurs at an individual level, either in class or through homework.

A review of seventeen studies measuring the relationship between homework and student achievement reveals that:

"of ... 50 correlations, 43 indicated that students who reported spending more time on homework also scored higher on a measure of achievement or attitude". This relationship held true across elementary, middle, and high school grade levels. Another study showed some indications that the optimal amount of homework for high school students was 1½ to 2½ hours per night, and less for younger students (Cooper, Robinson, and Patall 2006)."

Our experience in helping children learn math shows that students that set a priority in their schedule for homework time are successful. We recommend the following amount of homework time per class meeting.

Algebra 1	½ hour
Geometry	½ hour
Algebra 2	¾ hour
Precalculus	1 - 1 ½ hour
Calculus, Advanced Placement	2 hours
Statistics, Advanced Placement	1 – 1 ½ hour

Students can make the most of their homework by establishing a regular time and place to do their studies without interruptions (no TV, IPOD, cell phone, etc.). The best time for this study may be shortly after school rather than later at night.

We all want students to be successful in all their endeavors. The individual practice that homework provides is an essential component to success in learning mathematics.