

Practice Homework Help – Tips for Writing Assignments

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Being a former language arts teacher, I found it difficult to help my children with their writing assignments. I saw lots of spelling mistakes, punctuation errors, and poorly developed ideas. The truth is, I was looking at their assignment with adult eyes when I should have been approaching their writing at their level. These three tips help keep things in perspective when I review their writing.

I Am Their Cheerleader

When I review my child's writing, I ask for permission to read it out loud. This gives them an opportunity to hear what it sounds like to the reader when in fact, it

may sound very different to them in their head as they are writing. As I read, I cheer good work by verbally saying, “I love this detail” or “You make an excellent argument.” Giving them verbal praise validates their hard work and efforts.

I Pretend I Am an Alien

I let my kids know that aliens have no knowledge or experience of life on earth, so it is only through reading their writing that I will understand what they are talking about. If your kids say they went to the movie theater over the weekend, then their writing needs to detail ordering tickets through the buzzing intercom, smelling buttery popcorn, waiting in long lines, reclining in the movie seat, being immersed in surround sound, etc. The same is true for non-fiction or argumentative writing – aliens do not know how humans think, so background information or persuasive reasoning needs to be articulated clearly.

I Ask Them to Read Their Writing Out Loud

Humor me for a while and read this paragraph out loud:

To help your child self-identify common mistakes. Like run-on or fragment sentences. Ask them to read their sentence out loud and only pause to take a breath where there is a period and this is how they will see their mistakes and learn how to fix them because otherwise they will only write like how they talk and write like it's a stream of consciousness.

Do you see my point? If they sound robot-like or run out of breath while reading out loud, chances are, their punctuation is not used correctly. They will soon learn how to use a comma for a pause and a period for a full stop. Before you know it, they will master the semi-colon!

Go be your child's cheerleader!

Jaime

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