



There is some evidence that homework is most effective when used as a short and focused intervention

Cost

£££££

Evidence strength



Impact (months)

+5

Effect size

0.44

What is it?

Homework refers to tasks given to pupils by their teachers to be completed outside of usual lessons. Common homework activities in secondary schools include completing tasks assigned in lessons, preparing for tasks in future lessons, routine coursework, and revision for tests and examinations. Our definition also includes activities such as 'homework clubs' where pupils have the opportunity to complete homework in school but outside normal school hours, and 'flipped learning' models, where pupils prepare at home for classroom discussion and application tasks.

How effective is it?

The evidence shows that the impact of homework, on average, is five months' additional progress. However, beneath this average there is a wide variation in potential impact, suggesting that how homework is set is likely to be very important.

There is some evidence that homework is most effective when used as a short and focused intervention (e.g. in the form of a project or specific target connected with a particular element of learning) with some exceptional studies showing up to eight additional months' positive impact on attainment. Benefits are likely to be more modest, up to two to three months' progress on average, if homework is more routinely set (e.g. learning vocabulary or completing practice tasks in mathematics every day).

Evidence also suggests that how homework relates to learning during normal school time is important. In the most effective examples homework was an integral part of learning, rather than an add-on. To maximise impact, it also appears to be important that students are provided with high quality feedback on their work (see [Feedback](#)).

Some studies indicate that there may be an optimum amount of homework of between one and two hours per school day (slightly longer for older pupils), with effects diminishing as the time that students spend on homework increases.

Evidence of homework in secondary schools for students' learning outcomes has rarely been investigated in the Arab world. There is some evidence that 'flipped learning' approaches in which students learn content at home and interact with teachers in the classroom may be an effective type of homework and a modern teaching strategy to help teachers shift from the traditional learning towards implementing the student-centered approaches.

Studies in UAE, Oman, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia focused on the value of flipped learning as a tool to improve students' understanding in subjects like math, science, and English increase parental involvement. However, these same studies showed that flipped learning benefited high achieving learners more than the other students.

To date, research on homework in secondary schools is absent in this region despite the general belief of its importance in improving the learning process. More research is needed in this area and investigate ways to improve the quality of the homework and the best means to support teachers implementation in flipped classroom and design in instructional materials.

How secure is the evidence?

Homework has been extensively researched. There is a relatively consistent picture that pupils in schools which give more homework perform better. However, there are only a small number of studies which have investigated whether this relationship is due to the homework itself, rather than other school factors. These studies compare classes where homework is introduced to similar classes where homework is not given. They tend to show that homework can be beneficial, but this finding is less secure than the first, because of the smaller number of studies and the quality of the evidence.

What are the costs?

There are few costs associated with homework, though there are implications for staff time for preparation and marking. Overall costs are estimated as very low.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

What should I consider?

Planned and focused activities are more beneficial than homework which is more regular but may be routine or not linked with what is being learned in class.

The broader evidence suggests that homework should not be used as a punishment or penalty for poor performance.

A variety of tasks with different levels of challenge is likely to be beneficial.

The broader evidence suggests that the quality of homework is more important than the quantity. Pupils should receive specific and timely feedback on homework.

Have you made the purpose of homework clear to children (e.g. to increase a specific area of knowledge, or fluency in a particular area)?

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