

# What Your Child Is Showing You During Homework

## A short guide to noticing what you may be missing

When a child freezes, avoids, rushes or gives up, it can be easy to mistake what you're seeing for laziness or carelessness. In my experience, it usually isn't.

When a child struggles, they're usually telling you something. Just not in words. After seventeen years in classrooms, I've learned to watch for it and I can teach you the first part in a few minutes.

Here's why it matters.

Two children stare at the same page for a full minute before writing anything. From across the room, they look identical.

One has no idea where to begin.

The other knows exactly what to do and is bracing, because they've already decided they'll fail.

Same behavior. Opposite cause. What each child needs next is completely different. Telling them apart is my whole job. And it starts with watching the right moments.

After all these years, one of the truest things I know is this: I usually learn more in the ten seconds before a child starts a "hard" task than in the ten minutes after.

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## Try this once this week

Pick one ordinary task: homework, reading, a project, studying for a quiz, even getting their materials organized. Watch for ten or fifteen minutes. Don't teach, don't fix. Just notice.

Four moments I'd watch:

**1. Before they begin.** What did your child do in the first few seconds before any real work started? ☐ Started right away ☐ Reread the question again and again ☐ Looked around, or found something else to do ☐ Asked for help before trying ☐ Went still

**2. The first time it gets hard.** Every task has a moment it gets harder. I watch the five seconds after not whether they finish. ☐ Kept trying ☐ Guessed to move on ☐ Stopped ☐ Got upset ☐ Asked for help

Did they say anything? Write it down: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What they say about themselves.** One thing I always pay attention to is what a child tells you about who they *are* out loud, in a shrug, or by going quiet.

Did you catch anything? A word, a face, a sigh "I'm dumb," "I can't," or just a wall coming down? Note it, and when it happened: \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Right after a mistake.** Before you correct it, watch what they do on their own. That unprompted moment is often the real tell. ☐ Noticed and fixed it ☐ Didn't notice ☐ Froze ☐ Erased it all ☐ Gave up

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If nothing else, I hope this changes one thing.

The next time your child freezes, rushes, or gives up, I think you'll pause before deciding they're lazy or unmotivated. You'll wonder: *what are they trying to tell me?*

That's a different question. And in my experience, it's usually where things start to change.

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After you try this, you may start noticing patterns that were easy to miss before. You may not know yet what they mean. That is the part I work through in a Learning Roadmap.

I look at what you're seeing alongside information about your child, their schoolwork and report card, and work out the most likely places they may be getting stuck, what deserves attention first, and what I would try next.

One small favour: reply with 1, 2, 3 or 4, the moment above that surprised you most. It helps me understand what parents are noticing and what would be most useful for me to talk about next.

And if you'd like me to explain how the Learning Roadmap works and whether it might be useful for your child, just reply **ROADMAP**.

