

Getting Homework Help

Obviously, the best source of help on your homework is your pal, Mr. Rice. I try to schedule some time at the end of every class period for you to get started on homework assignments; that way, everyone should be able to leave class knowing how to do at least the basic problems. On most days, you can come back to see me during homeroom if there is anything you want clarified before school's out.

However, there are times between our class meetings where I will not be around. (At least I hope I there are.) Although you may be able to get the help you need by reading your book, checking your notes, or pulling up the textbook's website, you might at some point get help from another person.

I want you to know that getting help on homework is fine ... but only as long as it is actually '*help*'. Someone telling you a number and you writing it down as your answer is not help. It is cheating. Worse yet, it tends to give you a false sense of security that you'll be prepared to do the same problems by yourself on a test. It's very important that you seek out the right kind of help with homework; here are some tests to see if you are getting it:

- After the person has discussed the problem with you, could you redo the problem by yourself? Could you redo it if it had different numbers or measurements in it?
- Can you explain the person's work or method back to her?
- Do you see yourself as a spectator or a participant? Are you just watching?
- Does it seem like the kind of help you'd get if you came to my homeroom?
- Will you be able to do the problems tomorrow? Next week?

One small note: if you ask someone old (maybe even over 30 like me) to help with your homework, give him a little breathing room. After all, he does not spend forty minutes a day with me like you do ... he may need to look at your book for a moment to refresh his fond memories of school.

Some kids think that teachers are just interested in students turning in answer keys. I don't know if you know this, but I already have an answer key. The goal of you doing homework for me is so I can see how you're doing; not so I can see how your mom or your older brother or your tutor or the kid on your bus or the editor of the back of the book is doing. If any of those people can help you learn a bit when you're outside of math class, that's great. But you do need to **learn** the math ... not just recopy it.

One last thing ... remember that I will ask for questions every day an assignment is due before it is turned in. So, if you have one or two problems that you couldn't figure out the night before, I may be able to help. I may work out the entire problem with you; I may just discuss the solution path. This will depend on how important the particular problem is to our topic.

Maybe you'll never need help on homework ... but if so, please remember all this.