

9 Ways to make Speech Therapy Homework Work for You

This may be the first time you've had to do "homework" in years and you may need to (re)establish good homework habits to set yourself up for success. Here are some tips to help you get started.

1) Schedule a Time

Putting homework on the calendar, like any other important appointment, is a good way to make sure you don't neglect it.

Pick a time of day when you have energy and can focus. Schedule your homework for that time every day, to establish a habit.

If your goal is an hour of practice every day, don't feel that you have to do it all at once. You can break up homework into 20- or 30-minute chunks. This will help prevent mental fatigue and boredom.

Remember, consistency is what matters.

2) Make a Plan

If your speech-language pathologist (SLP) doesn't give you a specific set of exercises, it may be up to you to decide what you're going to do each day and when.

It's a good idea to make a "sandwich" of difficulty. That is, start with something that's not too challenging to warm up the brain, then move to the harder tasks, then finish up with something a bit easier to leave yourself feeling confident.

3) Pick a Good Spot

Find a place in your home that's comfortable, but not too comfortable to do your work.

If the couch or a recliner leaves you too relaxed, your focus may relax, too. Sitting at the kitchen table or at a desk is a good idea, as it can put you into a work mindset.

Of course, if sitting upright in a chair is physically uncomfortable, you won't be able to focus on your work either.

Pick the right spot for your needs.

4) Minimize Distractions

Background noise makes it difficult to focus, so turn off the TV or radio when you do your homework. Silence the alerts on your phone and computer. Pick a time when family members aren't all in the same room.

Sometimes a peaceful background of music can help you focus, so experiment with what works for you.



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If your homework is becoming very easy and you want to make it harder, try adding the TV or talk radio in the background. This can help you get ready for those noisy restaurants that are so challenging now.

5) Have a Helper on Hand

A communication partner can be a big help with speech-language exercises.

A helper can let you know whether an answer is correct or clear, provide cues when you're stuck, or engage in conversation to help you practice a strategy. S/he may be able to offer technical help, should you need it, if you're practicing with a computer or tablet.

Having your helper attend some of your therapy sessions can be useful, too. The helper will learn tips from the therapist that s/he can reinforce at home.

Who would make a good homework helper?

Your primary caregiver may not be the best homework helper for a number of reasons, so think carefully about who you want to help you.

Consider asking your spouse, a friend, a family member, or a volunteer. If you have friends who want to help but don't know what to do, asking them to help you with homework may be perfect.

Homework helpers can join you via Skype, Facetime, or phone as well, so your loved ones can still support you even if they don't live nearby.

6) Watch Out for Frustration

If you find yourself getting angry or frustrated while you're practicing, stop.

Take a break. Breathe deeply and calm down.

Practice is supposed to help you get better. If the exercises leave you feeling frustrated, they're probably too hard or you're too tired.

Ask for help. Or pick an easier activity or setting.

If you start to associate homework with negative emotions, you probably won't stick to your schedule. You need to watch out for negative feelings, and change what you're doing the instant you feel them.

7) Reward your Effort

It's important to set goals for yourself, and just as important to reward yourself when you reach them. Simply sticking to your practice schedule is a huge achievement, so give yourself credit for that. The number of items you get correct doesn't matter as much as the fact that you're trying. Your efforts will pay off over time, and that can be its own reward.

8) Use your Skills Outside Homework Time

The point of home exercises isn't to get good at home exercises—it's to improve your thinking and communication skills while you're engaged in activities that matter to you.

This is what SLPs call "carryover." It isn't always easy, but carryover is the goal of any exercise.

Practice your homework strategies throughout the day.

If you've been working on describing words, for example, try to describe the words you can't think of during dinner conversation.

If you've been working on asking questions in therapy, then ask questions when you're talking to your sister. Ask family and friends to encourage you to use your strategies as you go

about your day.

Nobody likes being corrected all the time, though, so it's okay to set times when you want reminders and times when you just want to be left to speak as you please. Make sure you're clear with friends and families about which times are which.

9) Use Good Tools

Try combining these tips with an app that's specifically engineered to help adults recover their language skills after a stroke or some other type of acquired brain injury. At Tactus Therapy Solutions, we create apps that allow adults with acquired communication disorders to practice independently at home. We build-in cues and scoring to make every app enjoyable, easy to use, and effective. We want you to succeed!

With a Tactus app, you can get in more repetitions and practice between therapy sessions—and this can help speed up your progress.

PEP TALK FOR HOMEWORK HELPERS

While it's important to improve communications skills while doing every day tasks, nobody likes being corrected all the time. So, respect and appreciate that there are homework therapy times and other times that your loved one should be left to speak as they please.

About Tactus Therapy: Tactus Therapy aims to provide a better stroke recovery journey. Founded in 2011, we believe in building relationships between people and technology to enhance the therapeutic process and empower stroke survivors to direct their own recovery. The company offers a wide range of speech, language, and cognitive rehab applications. "Tactus" means touch in Latin, and the touch screen is what makes Tactus Therapy Solutions unique and so easy to use. Two taps and therapy begins!



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