



*The following letter was written to a seventh-grade boy from QWERTY after completing a comprehensive evaluation. Rick just began seventh grade in a new middle school and is frustrated by the increased homework load he is facing:*

Dear Rick,

It was great to talk to you on the phone the other day and hear how the school year is starting out. We think this could be a really great year for you! You asked us a good question, and we think it deserves just as good an answer. That's why we decided to write down a few of the things and add a little more to it now. We figured if we wrote it down, we could also share it with a bunch of other teenagers who sometimes wonder the same thing you do. You asked, "Why do we have homework?" Then you added, "Especially when I don't learn anything from it." Good question(s).

That second part is a real bummer. It is hard as heck to feel motivated to do homework if it doesn't feel like you are learning anything from it. So if you are going to deal with the fact that homework just simply is NOT going to go away, it is especially important to think about the first part of your question.

Sometimes we have homework to help our memory. When it comes to remembering, nothing beats going over something an extra time later in the day. Sometimes we have homework for added practice. Most skills get better the more we practice them. Examples include sports, artistic projects, typing . . . and reading, writing, math, and learning about subjects like science and history. Sometimes we have homework to help us exercise our mind's energy: you've heard people say, "Use it or lose it," and they are right when it comes to your mind.

There's another reason to do homework, and we think it's the most important of all. We just spent a bunch of time learning about your mind as it relates to school. For example, we learned that you have great logic, good vocabulary, excellent approaches to how to master a skill, and many more strengths. We also saw that you have a harder time with writing down your great thoughts and that you can get especially frustrated when some jobs get difficult or boring. Sometimes we have homework so we can practice our understanding of all that stuff. We might not be learning history—we might be learning how we learn history and thus how we can learn other things better. We might not be learning how to do long division—we might be learning how we can manage doing a lot of repetitious and boring work. Believe us, there's plenty of that in the world, and it helps to learn to handle it. We might not be learning science—we might be practicing how to organize our ideas in our heads or on paper. We learn a lot from homework, even when it doesn't feel like it. And truly intelligent kids learn even more, because they look for what they can learn in their homework instead of just hoping learning will happen to them while they do homework.

Since you have proven to be highly intelligent, we're thinking you are one of those kids that will actually learn more, rather than less, from homework. What do you think?