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### Okay, Fine.

August 30th, 2008 by [Dan Meyer](#)

For those who were around back when I wrote [my anti-homework manifesto](#), lemme confess: I'm assigning homework now. Two problems every day — one tough, the other tougher — choose between them, same grade value for each.

#### 6. Homework

##### Practice

$$3 - 7 + 12 - 6 - (+7)$$

##### Challenge

$$3 + (-7) - (+12) - 6 - (+7)$$

Our block schedule inspired my not-quite-180° reversal, the fact that my kids go 48 hours between classes and need *some* kind of interim refresher. Kids are still cool 'cause I'm not indiscriminately assigning #1 – 30 (odd, of course). Parents still haven't made their minds up about it.

Regardless: you win, homework.

[29 Comments »](#)

## 29 Responses to “Okay, Fine.”

1. on 30 Aug 2008 at 4:10 pm [1 Estie Cuellar](#)

Okay, you so totally rock! I just want you to know that our school year started this past week and all of my students already have blogs. Would you mind if I directed them to your blog and have them comment on some of your posts? I think it would do their minds some good...

2. on 30 Aug 2008 at 4:34 pm [2 JasonP](#)

Surely you're not feeling guilty over this? I hardly think two problems count as overtaxing their poor little minds.

And, why would parents need to make their minds over this? It's TWO PROBLEMS.

3. on 30 Aug 2008 at 4:45 pm [3 mathman6293](#)

I have had to reassure parents that I don't assign much homework. But I am finding that our new GA Math Performance Standards have too much to cover well and home work is creeping in from time to time.

4. on 30 Aug 2008 at 5:05 pm [4 Kate](#)

Pffft. The odds have the answers in the back. Assign the evens. Everyone knows that. :-P

5. on 30 Aug 2008 at 6:05 pm [5 dan](#)

@**Estie**, feel free. No age or height minimum to ride the rides around here.

@**JasonP**, the fretting parents fret because they want more homework for their kids not less. Keeps 'em out of gangs, I suppose they suppose.

@**mathman**, just make it matter, right?

@**Kate**, you assign evens and they complete all fifteen problems without knowing if they did any of them right. Assign odds but require every last little step. Heh.

6. on 30 Aug 2008 at 6:37 pm [6 Claire Thompson](#)

Love it! Some of the kids will do both (just to see if the challenge really is harder) while others will do just the practice either because they think they're getting away with something, or they want to stay in their comfort zone. And how can any student get upset with one question of math homework every other weeknight (they only have to do one question, right?)?! As for the parents who want their kids to have more homework—perhaps they can pull out some research demonstrating the beneficial effect of

large amounts of homework on learning and achievement...

7. on 30 Aug 2008 at 6:51 pm [7 Doug](#)

I have been thinking about the “homework manifesto” since i’ve read it last spring. I teach in New York and we don’t start w/ students until Thursday....

The whole HWM reminds me of the prisoners dilemma. In the best case (unattainable?) everyone does 15 min of HW. Its about getting more repetitions for kids. Reality sets in and you see only the top tier students do the work etc. Lower tier kids, it hurts their average.

Maybe it seems sisyphysian but isn’t it better aim to get all kids to do HW? Isn’t HW more about repetitions and practice? I also coach multiple sports, so getting more reps is another priority in my life.

While I agree wholeheartedly that HW benefits top students and hurts lower students, wouldn’t it be better to strive towards all students doing HW (getting their reps in coaching lingo?)?? Maybe more strive towards more meaningful or shorter assignments?

I teach in a rural district with smaller classes (biggest last year was 19) so maybe this is more attainable. But I can’t believe that fewer reps is more beneficial for students.....this could also be part of me teaching history opposed to teaching math etc.....

8. on 30 Aug 2008 at 7:42 pm [8 mathman6293](#)

I think the reps thing make sense when you are trying to perfect a task. During my first year of teaching, in Morton Grove, IL, which was a mostly middle and upper middle class community only about half the kids did their home work. Now that I teach in a lower income suburban Atlanta kids still don’t do their home work.

I finally decided that I would make them work in a more bell to bell format. I noticed many math teachers give kids time at the end of class to homework anyway. Why not give them work that they must do in class and I can help and guide.

But reps only matter if the person wants to get better. If a student is just trying to get by and they don’t care it doesn’t matter they won’t do the repetition.

9. on 30 Aug 2008 at 8:14 pm [9 Claire Thompson](#)

@Doug, but Dan isn’t saying less reps. He’s getting the kids to do the reps in class. From [Why I Don’t Assign Homework](#) aka the homework manifesto Dan says “*My point is this: if my kids evaluate and graph forty points over a class period, as they did yesterday, why would I send them home with any more?*”

10. on 31 Aug 2008 at 6:15 am [10 Kate](#)

To be clear, I was being facetious. Note the smiley. :)

But, I do think homework has a purpose. And I do regularly assign a small number of selected “exercises” (I don’t pay attention to whether they are even or odd :), anathema though it may be to the edublogosphere.

Civilization has helpfully developed efficient algorithms that facilitate solving more complicated

problems. Yes learners need to know why the algorithms work. But they also need to be able to use them quickly and correctly. Which requires practice. Sorry, it just does.

Requiring practice away from the classroom on one's own has a purpose. In class, it might look easy. In class, it's stored in your short term memory. Spend 15 minutes on it outside of class. If it's easy, great, we know we did our jobs, and 15 minutes isn't going to kill you. If it's too hard, great, you learned something about what you don't know.

11. on 31 Aug 2008 at 6:32 am [11 mathman6293](#)

I agree fifteen minutes of practice will not kill anyone except the children who have to do it. On a personal level I have 3 kids who are pretty good students, sometimes getting them to do their homework is difficult at best. As a parent, I feel it is my kids' responsibility to do their homework but I feel put upon because their schools don't seem to understand and care about family constraints.

Frame that in my role as a teacher, I am sensitive to family issues and know that there are many family pressures that we can't even know about...

Also, once you are in a "real world" will your boss assign you fifteen minutes of homework because it is good for the company? I doubt it – (I worked in business for 15 years before teaching.)

12. on 31 Aug 2008 at 7:08 am [12 Cory](#)

I am guilty! Guilty of most of the things people are talking about in the original post of HWM. I have been compliant, have had horrible classroom management, and have had students copy things off the board just to make it seem like we are doing work, thus learning (to name a few that come to mind).

My first year I was just happy to survive. Then I saw my shortcomings and have been trying ever since to "fix" them. It has felt like such a slow process for me.

Last year I assigned homework for the first half of the year, then I stopped. I stopped mostly because it was easier for me to do so. I was being complaint. Less than half the students were doing the homework. I was, and still am a person who believes if you assign homework, you better be going over it the next day... otherwise what a pointless act. I felt like I was wasting time, about 8-10 minutes out of a 43 minute class going over homework very few people did.

What I learned from stopping homework, although for the wrong reasons, was I had so much more time to have students practice in front of me. We had so much more class time to do practice!! WOW.

We don't start school until Thursday, but I have changed my mind about HW. I will be assigning it, but have been inspired by the form above. I like fact you give students a choice. I will most likely be modifying this practice to choose two from the following method.

As for classroom management, I'm glad someone else had heard about ENVOY. I only went to a one day conference by Michael Grinder and would love to go again. Funny thing, I came across this book just the other day before reading it in one of your posts. heh.

I do have a question however. How do you factor homework into your grading system? How much is it worth.

Currently I am doing a 25% HW, 25% QUIZ, 50% TESTS breakdown. I am iffy on these percentages and am looking for some other breakdowns.

I will be coming back to the numerous blogs here for a long time I'm sure. Thanks for all the conversations you've started and I can read/participate in.

13. *on 31 Aug 2008 at 8:11 am*[13 Andy](#)

This year I stopped giving nightly homework, but I have been giving weekly homework (assigned Fri, due Thur). Each assignment has 3 parts: Review (to go over things even my upper level classes forget: percents, fractions, etc.), Practice (for students to practice a few things that will be on an upcoming test), and Problem Solving (where I try to get them to think at a higher level than just working out the typical practice problems). We have been in school for 2.5 weeks, and so far, it seems to be working well. Most students are completing the review and practice problems, and attempting at least a few of the problem solving problems.

14. *on 31 Aug 2008 at 3:14 pm*[14 Nancy](#)

Too bad homework can't be for the people who need it. The brightest kids will do the homework whether they need it or not just because you assigned it. Wouldn't it be nice if they could do something that would make them think? The kids that need more problems, more review many times don't do the homework. What to do? what to do? If I taught in a classroom I don't know what I would do but I think I would lean toward no grades for homework and work at home that would benefit everybody.

I like Dan's differentiated option with the same score for either effort. I also like the idea of discussing something with parent or sibling as homework, and maybe jotting down a few notes, I like journaling (even in math) for homework, I like looking at a few websites (URLs given by me) and reflecting on what they saw, did, explored, learned.

Parents could be made aware of these homework options. Several kids could share what they found out each day with the class. If the kid doesn't do the assignment—their loss. There is virtually no added daily work for you. All you have to do is come up with some exciting expectations—monday website, tuesday discuss with somebody, wed journal, thursday design your own math problem to share with class, etc.

Finished with my ramblings—you guys are going to be glad when I retire.

15. *on 31 Aug 2008 at 5:41 pm*[15 D.C. Hess](#)

I don't teach math, I teach history, but my homework policy this year is differentiated. I assign two grades: a letter grade (A-F) and a work habit grade (1-4). The letter grade is determined by formal assessments (MC quizzes, written finals, short answer unit exams) and by writing samples, projects, and notes they compile in a portfolio. The work habit grade is determined by attendance, homework, class participation, and meeting of deadlines.

Late work is accepted, tests can be retaken, essays can be revised, until the end of the semester.

When students don't meet deadlines, don't complete homework, don't come to class, and then fail projects and tests, I have an indicator for assigning tutoring. If a student manages to evade these things and pass, I can seek enrichment for the advanced student or look closely for signs of cheating.

Homework then becomes targeted at those who need it. We still do projects and essays that are graded but homework like vocab lists, reading questions, worksheets, etc. become additional support used for tutoring, not a determiner of class grades.

16. *on 01 Sep 2008 at 3:46 pm*[16 Glenn](#)

For my Algebra 2 class, I do something similar. I assign between 3 and 8 problems. The range is because sometimes the section has 4 different kinds of problems!

One problem is always a word problem, because the final exam is district written, and is 80% word problems.

These problems are the required problems, and are always the hard problems. They can work any number of problems in the book, but I will only require the few I assign. Most learners will have to work some others to get to the hard ones, but only they will know how many, and only they get to DECIDE how many!

17. on 03 Sep 2008 at 6:14 pm [17 Tony Lucchese](#)

I return to the blogosphere after a years absence, only to find Dan assigning homework?! Honestly, the whole world seems upside down.

18. on 03 Sep 2008 at 7:33 pm [18 dan](#)

Well lookit this guy.

19. on 04 Sep 2008 at 2:13 am [19 ryan](#)

I teach at a school in England, where we have been instructed to set a minimum of 45 minutes homework per night for our classes.

45 minutes! I struggle to concentrate for 45 minutes!

Can anyone come up with a way to fill 45 minutes with anything other than busy work??

20. on 05 Sep 2008 at 9:54 pm [20 Chris Lehmann](#)

Ryan — Reading a great book. Still the best way to lose a few hours without even noticing.

21. on 09 Nov 2008 at 6:46 am [21 dy/dan » Blog Archive » This New School Year](#)

[...] already wrote up my motivations for this one. Just an update, then, that it's really, really easy for me check for understanding, to have a [...]

22. on 12 Nov 2008 at 4:21 pm [22 Kate W](#)

I really like your idea of only assigning 2 math problems for homework, one easy and one hard. Not only does it sound easier to grade, but the students can spend time focusing on only a couple problems and not get frustrated with 30. I am student teaching right now, and getting endorsed in math, so any help on what works is great for me!

23. on 23 Dec 2008 at 11:50 am [23 dy/dan » Blog Archive » Why I Don't Assign Homework](#)

[...] Okay, so I am assigning homework. [...]

24. on 17 Feb 2009 at 1:45 am [24 Touzel](#)

I see that you are using the KeyMath curriculum at your school. Cool.

I am interested in your opinion on IMP (<http://mathimp.org/>), which is also published by Key Press. I did a search to see if I could find your opinions about it, but I couldn't find anything. Have you talked about IMP somewhere in the blog? If so, where?

25. on 14 Oct 2009 at 9:41 am [25 Honeymoon Over? | Teacher vs. Wild](#)

[...] the author talks about how he used to assign a bunch of homework, then assigned none, and now assigns one. Seems like a good idea. My aim is to try and keep down the amount of homework while upping the [...]

26. on 08 Mar 2010 at 6:07 pm [26 Thing 4: Voices in the Blogosphere | Teach English](#)

[...] an adamant stand against homework, but actually changed his perspective after reading one of the comments. Because teachers are constantly reinventing themselves, their classrooms, and their methods, [...]

27. on 16 Jul 2010 at 7:20 am [27 Thing 4 | CrossTeach](#)

[...] of the learning involved with the homework I assign. (By the way...did anyone notice his follow-up to the homework post?) Anyway, I know that if I assign a 20 min reading assignment, I usually get good compliance but the [...]

28. on 03 Nov 2010 at 9:39 pm [28 Homework is for losers..... | Ben Bridges' Blog](#)

[...] set of questions on mathletics with a score > 85% 3. Two questions. One tough, one tougher (took Dan's [...])

29. on 17 Feb 2011 at 6:43 pm [29 matthew mcrea » The Trials and Tribulations of Homework](#)

[...] 2.0 saw me adopting Dan Meyer's "one problem a night" method. The one problem a night was met with pretty strong accolades from the students, but even then, [...]

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