

CHICKEN **10** WAYS | **3 COOL DIY** PROJECTS THIS WEEKEND

# FamilyCircle

ORGANIZING  
MADE EASY

CLEAR  
THE  
CLUTTER



CLEVER  
CLEANING  
TIPS

MAKE-AHEAD

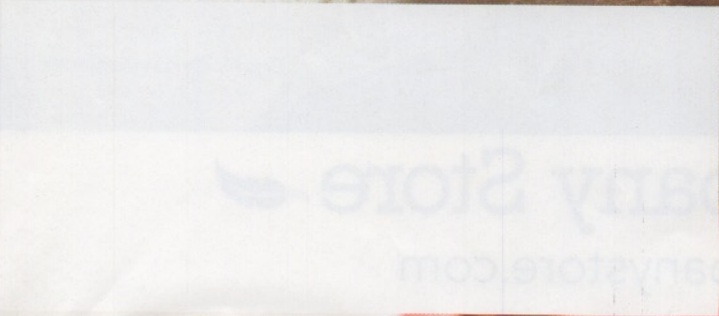
**Breakfasts**

*Sleep Well  
Every Night*

*Best apple  
pie EVER*  
page 73

# Sweet!

BEYOND BAKE SALES  
The Fastest Way  
to Fundraise





# End Homework Battles

BY LESLIE JOSEL

*Instead of nonstop arguing, start your school-year peacekeeping mission.*

*As a time management pro, I get questions constantly from parents about how to deal with kids' homework. My answers could cut your stress by a lot.*

**Q: What's the best way to get my son to sit down and knock out his assignments so we can all move on with the night?**

**A:** Unfortunately, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Each kid has individual preferences and work styles that should drive an overall approach. To figure out guidelines likeliest to get good results, ask yourself:

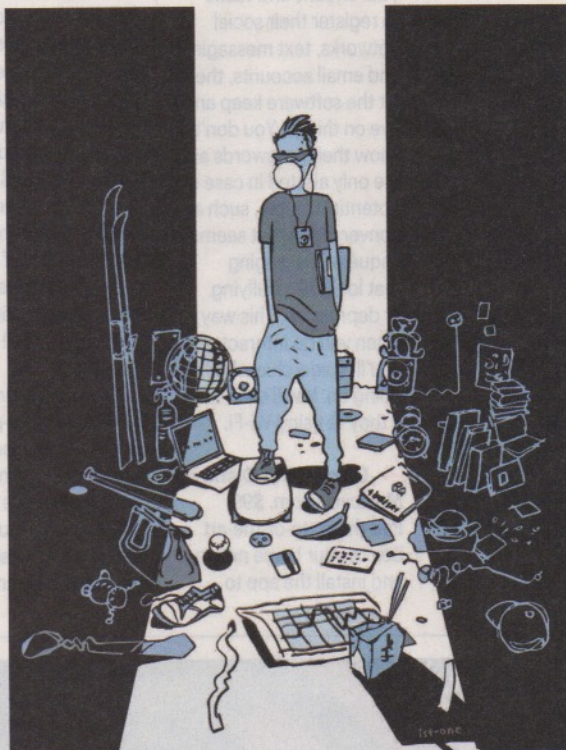
- How's their energy level right after school?
- Do they prefer working in a quiet environment or one with some background noise?
- Can they work fast and furious, or do they need frequent breaks in order to go the distance?

Bottom line, homework is the last thing kids want to be doing. Instead of just insisting more or less arbitrarily on what you think is best, or sticking with the approach that was taken with you a couple of decades ago, work with them on how to maximize their efforts. Consider the story of a student client of mine, Jake, who was constantly at odds with his mom over how long it took for him to get his work done. When we talked it out, I learned that Jake's mom was demanding he start work immediately after arriving home to try to limit his screen time. (Most of us can probably relate.) Yet Jake would find a million reasons not to get started. When I quizzed Jake's mom about his demeanor and energy level after school, she revealed that he seemed totally wiped out. This, to me, was telling. Turned out, pushing his homework start

time back gave Jake a much-needed opportunity to reboot while enabling him to focus more effectively and finish his work in a reasonable time frame.

**Q: Where should my teen do her homework?**

**A:** Most parents think the best answer is: at a desk, in her room, with the door shut. Not necessarily! For some, a quiet, secluded bedroom can feel isolated and actually make it hard to concentrate—those kids prefer being closer to the action in the house, needing a feeling of connectedness in order to relax and focus. My advice: Ask your child. You may be surprised to hear that most teens can tell you exactly what environment works best for them. They just need your help to define and create the optimum situation.



**Q: How about the cell phone? Should it be off-limits while homework is happening?**

**A:** Technically, yes, because concentrating on one thing is more productive than trying to multitask. That said, in 2016, expecting older kids to go hours without checking their phone is not so realistic. The workaround is to have your teens spend a certain period of time doing homework distraction-free, then take a scheduled break when they can check their texts and send off a quick reply or two. I've found that when kids know there's a system in place for them to check messages, they're willing to go with the flow.

**MEET THE EXPERT** Mom of two Leslie Josel is the founder of Order Out of Chaos, a consulting firm specializing in student organization. For more information, go to [orderoochaos.com](http://orderoochaos.com).



## Music Note

Researchers, teachers, parents and kids could endlessly debate whether listening to music while doing homework is beneficial. Some studies find in favor, others don't. When asked about this, my answer is always the same: It depends on the student. Your job is to help your kids determine when music helps them focus and when it's distracting. If a student generally finds music helpful, I suggest creating a 30-minute playlist to eliminate any temptation to touch a device and play DJ. On the plus side, the playlist can become a helpful behavioral psychology tool—when the students hear it start, they mentally switch into work mode. The music can become a timekeeper of sorts too—I have students who have been using playlists for so long that they know The Beatles means they're 15 minutes in and Taylor Swift signifies the homestretch. Music can offer helpful cues about how time is passing.

### Web Extra!

For "5 Secrets to Stress-Free Mornings," go to [familycircle.com/easymorning](http://familycircle.com/easymorning).