

**Homework habits  
across Australia**  
the view from  
students and parents



# Introduction

Central to the concept of improving education for students is collaborative working between students, their parents and their school. As learning does not stop when a student exits the school gates, homework is an integral pillar of the overall education they receive and so in order to fulfil their true potential, teachers' and parents' ongoing involvement with homework, be it supportive or instructive, is vital.

Equally important to homework's effectiveness is parents' ability to see how it fits into the bigger picture and for communication to flow in both directions. And although technology is often criticised for distracting students from their work, particularly at home, its effective application can help create elegant and inclusive learning solutions to these challenges, removing the binary default of completing a task in exchange for a mark. With greater oversight and transparency, students can be better assessed and their specific needs supported in a more efficient way.

**Learning does not  
stop when a student  
exits the school gates**

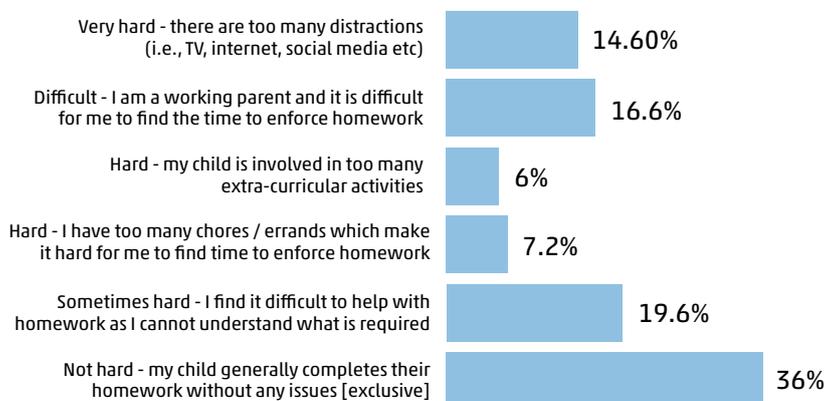


# The picture for parents across Australia

A recent survey carried out through a collaboration between Firefly and Pureprofile established the barriers that stand in the way of completing homework assignments from the perspective of both parent and student, as well as the real reasons underpinning not meeting homework deadlines versus the excuse given to teachers. When asked 'How hard is it to ensure your child completes their homework?', **15.5%** of parents with female students and **11.5%** of parents with male students said 'very hard', while a further **16%** and **18.6%**, respectively, said that as working parents it is difficult for them to find the time to enforce homework.

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## HOW HARD IS IT TO ENSURE YOUR CHILD COMPLETES THEIR HOMEWORK?



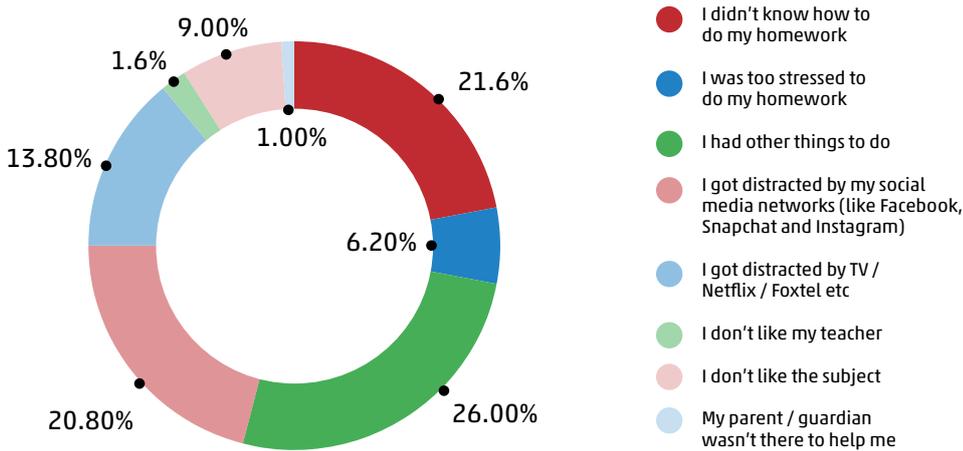
Regional differences were discovered in terms of the answers given to this question with **39%** in New South Wales (NSW) answering 'very hard' (**19.5%**) or 'difficult' (**19.5%**) compared to just **12.6%** and **14.4%**, respectively (**27% total**) in Victoria (VIC)). Conversely, **39.6%** of parents in VIC did not find it hard to get children to do their homework, as opposed to **25.0%** in NSW.

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	ACT	TAS	NT	Total
<b>Very hard - there are too many distractions (i.e., TV, internet, social media etc)</b>	25	14	13	6	10	0	4	1	<b>73</b>
	19.50%	12.60%	14.00%	9.20%	13.50%	0.00%	21.10%	33.30%	<b>14.60%</b>
<b>Difficult - I am a working parent and it is difficult for me to find the time to enforce homework</b>	25	16	16	10	15	1	0	0	<b>83</b>
	19.50%	14.40%	17.20%	15.40%	20.30%	14.30%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>16.60%</b>
<b>Hard - my child is involved in too many extra-curricular activities</b>	10	6	5	3	5	1	0	0	<b>30</b>
	7.80%	5.40%	5.40%	4.60%	6.80%	14.30%	0.00%	0.00%	<b>6.00%</b>
<b>Hard - I have too many chores / errands which make it hard for me to find time to enforce homework</b>	12	8	7	4	2	0	3	0	<b>36</b>
	9.40%	7.20%	7.50%	6.20%	2.70%	0.00%	15.80%	0.00%	<b>7.20%</b>
<b>Sometimes hard - I find it difficult to help with homework as I cannot understand what is required</b>	24	23	16	13	15	1	5	1	<b>98</b>
	18.80%	20.70%	17.20%	20.00%	20.30%	14.30%	26.30%	33.30%	<b>19.60%</b>
<b>Not hard - my child generally completes their homework without any issues [exclusive]</b>	32	44	36	29	27	4	7	1	<b>180</b>
	25.00%	39.60%	38.70%	44.60%	36.50%	57.10%	36.80%	33.30%	<b>36.00%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>500</b>
	<b>100.00%</b>								

# Real excuse versus excuse given

One of the most likely reasons for a child not completing their homework was that they didn't know how to do it (**18.6%** of boys and **22.5%** of girls nationwide; **21.6%** in total)

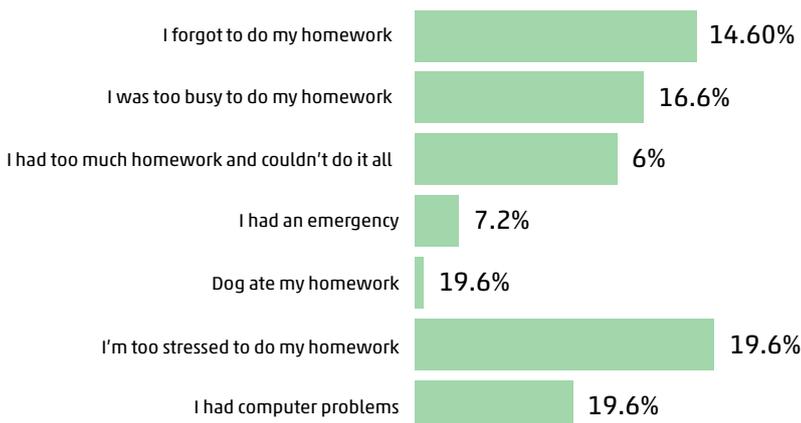
## USUALLY, WHAT'S THE REAL REASON FOR NOT COMPLETING YOUR HOMEWORK?



However, this rarely if ever translates into the excuse then given to a child's teachers (despite being a go-to excuse for **31.6%** of their parents a generation or so earlier), with most (**31.8%**) telling their teacher that they had simply forgotten to do it.

'I had too much homework and couldn't do it all' was the second most common answer to this question with **23.0%** of students of both genders giving this answer

## WHAT EXCUSE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR TEACHER WHEN YOU HAVEN'T DONE YOUR HOMEWORK?



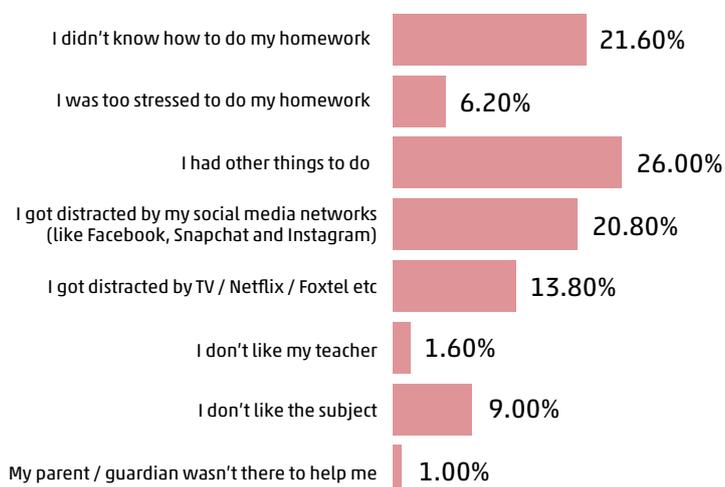
# The picture for parents across Australia

The age of students was also found to play a part in terms of the excuses given to their teacher when they have not done their homework. Forgetfulness appeared to be a trait for younger children with **41.5%** and **40.9%** of 11- and 12-year olds using this as an excuse, respectively, whereas once a student reached the age of 16, receiving too much homework becomes the main concern, with **32.7%** using this an excuse; the main justification in this age group. Being too busy was the most common reason for 13-year olds missing homework deadlines (**24.7%**), while forgetfulness seems to return at the ages of 14 and 15 (selected by **27.7%** and **28.0%** of respondents, respectively).

However, when pushed to provide the actual reasons behind non-completion of homework, it was clear that the perils of social media reared their head the older the child gets. 'I had other things to do' was the most selected answer among 11-, 12-, and 14-year olds, while 'I didn't know how to do it' was the number one interference among 13 year olds, and social media distractions are the biggest interruption for 15 and 16 year olds.

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## USUALLY, WHAT'S THE REAL REASON FOR NOT COMPLETING YOUR HOMEWORK (AGE GROUPS, 11-16)



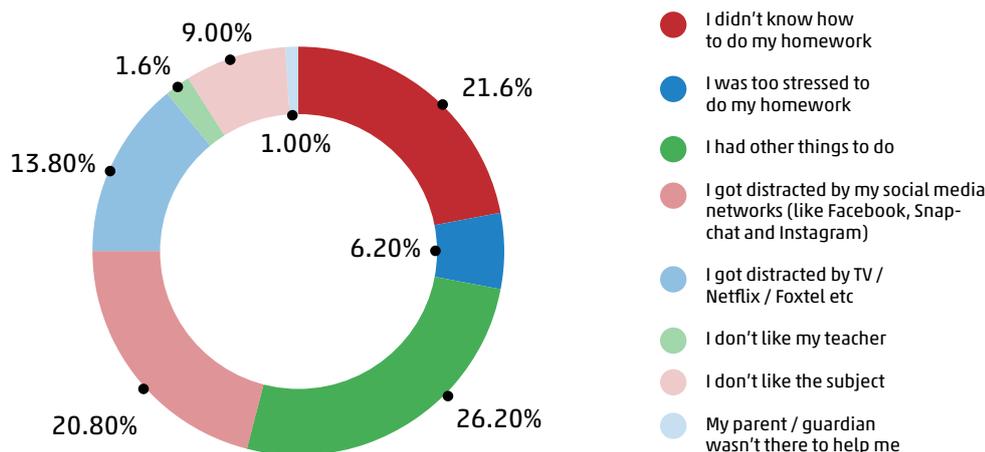


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# Competing for attention

The survey's findings underline that undisciplined use of technology can be a hindrance across the age brackets with distractions from social media (i.e. Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram) and TV/Netflix/Foxtel etc accounting for **34.6%** of all non-completion of homework, at **20.8%** and **13.8%**, respectively

## USUALLY, WHAT'S THE REAL REASON FOR NOT COMPLETING YOUR HOMEWORK?



The overwhelming finding from our research was that external distractions (be it technological, from social media, television, or something else – 'I had other things to do') are driving a wedge between students and getting their homework completed on time. In total, **60.6%** of the children surveyed found ways to spend their time doing something other than their homework.

As technology plays an ever-more significant part in the lives of young people, the traditional, transactional approach to sending a student home with physical bits of homework is becoming more and more at odds with their lives outside the classroom. With many other elements of our lives enriched by technology, and smart devices central to how young people organise their time and communicate, there are clear opportunities for technology to improve the efficiency of the setting and completion of homework.

# Technology as the solution

While our research highlights that technology is responsible for large swathes of missed homework across Australia, it could also be the prime solution, with online teaching tools supporting student empowerment and motivation through organising their own workloads and working at their own pace, underpinned by ongoing parental and teacher support. In addition, a disciplined use of technology can help immerse parents in their child's learning experiences, allowing them to become 'expert tutors' once they are also first-hand users. In turn, this helps them to nurture students to understand its wealth of benefits.

These trends pertaining to lack of confidence and time when undertaking homework tasks could be arrested through smarter technology use. Online learning tools can help students with their deadlines, organisation, submission of homework and the specific resources they need. Through empowering students to work in a bespoke way at their own pace, and with all the resources they need at their fingertips, this new way of working is more likely to find successful adoption among students.

**A disciplined use of technology can help immerse parents in their child's learning experiences**



With this in mind, the fact that homework no longer needs to be a binary operation of the teacher setting it and the student handing it in when online learning tools are introduced to the conversation should also offer hope to parents everywhere. Technology can enable teachers to deliver formative feedback on each iteration of work that is submitted, thus guiding students through their mistakes or successes. One consequence of increasing student confidence and relevance when it comes to homework would likely be a knock-on effect on hand in levels.

By developing a one-to-one personalised learning conversation with students, motivation that once may have been lacking could emerge, leading students to respond positively and hand more homework in on time and, by the same token, teachers can easily identify those students requiring assistance or an extra challenge. A process of ongoing self-assessment, such as utilising a rubric that allows students, parents and teachers to continuously appraise the quality of homework and determine whether they are on the right track can keep everyone on the same page and empowers parents to be expert tutors at home.

Overall, a tool with discoverable resources, which provides structure and creates a joined up conversation between teachers, students and parents can ultimately provide a truly transparent and engaging homework solution, letting students work with familiar technology and in their own way.

*500 parents and their children, proportionally representative sample across Australia, field work May 2018*

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