

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

Extension Home Economist



Taking Time For Homework

While you are busy with your farm harvest — baling hay, digging potatoes, picking fruit — your children are rediscovering the shape of an isosceles triangle, the path of the food chain, and the location of Yugoslavia. Your thoughts are on very different topics, and that's a good reason to take a step back and take some time for homework.

Researchers indicate that one of the best things that parents can do for their preadolescent and adolescent children is to practice ongoing monitoring of activities. Monitoring is a continuous process of keeping in touch with your child's schedule, friends, events and concerns. One particular check point with monitoring is homework time.

By using homework as a time to check in with each other, parents and children can regularly talk about how school is going, what assignments are due, and what topics are being addressed. Penn State researchers have found that this monitoring of homework is more critical for boys than for girls. And they show that a young male's success in school may be positively influenced by his parents' attention to his

assignments.

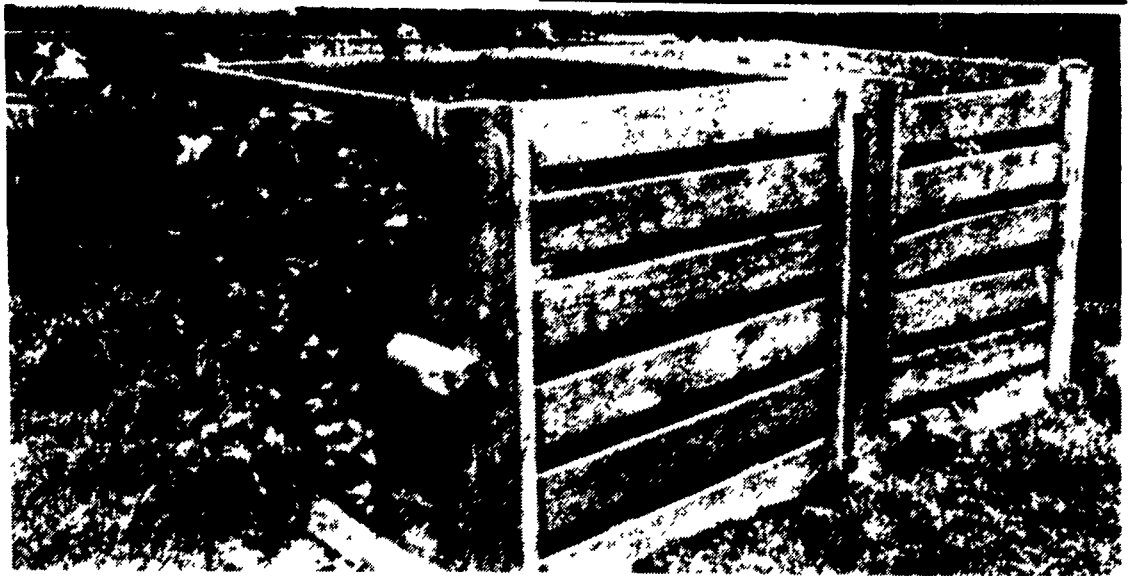
Monitoring is not snooping or spying. (This conveys to the child a lack of trust.) It is not completing a child's work for her. Monitoring of homework entails a few things. As a parent, take the time to:

- In the afternoon or early evening ask your child to list his subjects or classes to you and what assignments he has given. If your daughter has a hard time remembering work, teach her to carry a notebook and write down the items.

- Set a regular time and location for homework and reduce distractions so your child can focus on the task. Make sure she has adequate lighting.

- Periodically, drop in to check progress. Some children will need more checking than others. Elementary-school children may need you to sit with them as they work. With high school students, you may not need to review work, but it is still good to check in and ask what they are studying or reading in their literature class.

- Check the accuracy and quality of the work before the child can move to other, more fun, activities. Don't get stuck in the trap of checking homework five



This home-built composting bin is a convenient way to recycle organic yard wastes.

Build A Compost Bin

NEWARK, Del. — Nearly one-third of the materials going into landfills are yard wastes such as grass clippings, leaves, weeds and hedge trimmings, along with kitchen wastes such as potato peels and coffee grounds. These are all organic substances that can be composted and reused to provide valuable nutrients and

minutes before the school bus arrives in the morning.

Even if you don't know a lot about biology, it is still good to scan your daughter's vocabulary sheet. It is your routine checking and attention that matters more than your knowledge.

Taking time to monitor homework is just one step in an effective parent's plan to provide a secure, trustworthy environment for her child.

improve the texture of home landscape and garden soils.

Compost is a great soil amendment, according to Jay Windsor, University of Delaware Extension agricultural agent for Sussex County. This organic material increases the water-holding capacity of light sandy soils, and it improves heavy clay soils, making them less subject to compaction and increasing aeration.

A ratio of 30 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen (30:1) is ideal for a fast compost process. A ratio of 50 parts carbon to 1 part nitrogen (50:1) takes longer. Shredding materials to reduce particle size and mixing them well in the pile will speed decomposition. Various materials must be combined to achieve the right ratio.

To help you get that balance,

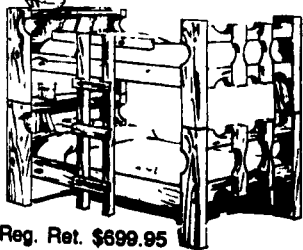
here are the carbon-to-nitrogen ratios for some common compost ingredients:

- Materials High in Nitrogen
- Food Wastes 15:1
 - Grass Clippings 20:1
 - Cow Manure 20:1
 - Horse Manure 25:1
- Materials High in Carbon
- Corn Stalks 60:1
 - Straw 80:1
 - Paper 170:1
 - Sawdust 500:1

Keep your compost pile small and manageable, Windsor and other experts advise. A 3 feet x 3 feet x 3 feet pile is a convenient size. The more often you turn the pile, the sooner it will be ready. Add water periodically to keep the ingredients damp but not soggy.

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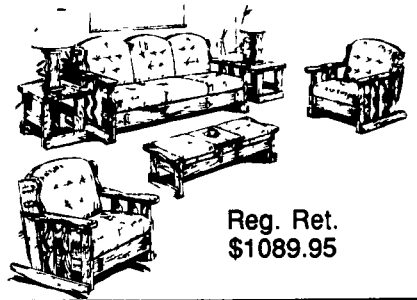
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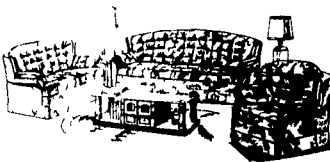
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