

Questions & Answers

Q: My grade 4 child is very competitive in sports. I think my child is competitive in the classroom, too. Rushing through assignments, hoping to be the first one finished is a habit. My child doesn't take the time to be neat or to check the work. I know this hurts my child's grades. How can I help?

A: It sounds like your child has a habit of turning tasks into competitions—wanting to be first across the finish line. But being first isn't what matters when it comes to schoolwork.

Start by talking with your child's teacher. Let her know you would like to work together on a plan to help your child's focus more on quality work, not speedy work.

Then, talk to your child. Put the competitive nature to work for your child by using a comparison from a sport, such as basketball. Explain that sometimes it is important for a player to get down the court as fast as he or she can. But when a player is shooting free throws, the accuracy is more important than the speed.

Doing schoolwork is more like shooting free throws. Tell your child that you're going to look over the homework each night to check the work for neatness and accuracy. If it's not up to an appropriate standard, tell them you'll ask them to do it over.

In school, the teacher can try the same approach, looking over work before it's handed in.

Soon your child will figure out that when they slow down, they'll get the work right the first time—and that actually takes less time in the long run!

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