

Section 1

#1: Opening Paragraph

Strengths:

- Your opening creates a vivid picture that readers can immediately connect with, using the image of a child at the kitchen table to draw us into the issue
- You clearly state your main argument at the end, telling readers exactly what position you'll be defending throughout the piece

Uneven Development → Your opening paragraph covers a lot of ground, moving from the scene-setting image to multiple broad questions about education. While the imagery is strong, you jump quite quickly from the specific example to very general statements about "generations" and "sacred pillars" without giving readers time to fully engage with each idea. Consider spending more time developing the connection between your opening scene and why this matters for families today. You might strengthen this by adding one or two sentences that show why this particular moment—the child at the table—matters so much for understanding the homework debate.

Exemplar: *After introducing the kitchen table scene, you could add: "This scene plays out in thousands of homes each night, yet few parents stop to ask whether these worksheets truly help their children learn. When we look closely at what research tells us, the answer might surprise many families."*

#2: Second Paragraph (Academic Evidence)

Strengths:

- You support your argument with specific research, mentioning Harris Cooper's work and the NSW Department of Education policy, which makes your claims more trustworthy
- You explain clearly why worksheets don't work well for young children, connecting the evidence to practical understanding

Missing Counter-Evidence → While you present research supporting your view, you don't acknowledge that some studies show different results or that experts disagree about homework's value. When you state that Cooper's findings "consistently" show "little to no correlation," you're presenting one interpretation without mentioning that homework's effectiveness can depend on many factors like the type of homework, how much is assigned, or the age of students. Including phrases like "for the

most part" or "in many cases" would make your argument stronger because it shows you've considered different viewpoints.

Exemplar: *"While Cooper's research generally shows minimal benefits for primary students, he also found that some types of homework—particularly reading for pleasure and short, focused practice—can support learning when used thoughtfully."*

#3: Fourth Paragraph (Responsibility Counter-Argument)

Strengths:

- You fairly present the opposing view about discipline and responsibility before responding to it, which shows you're thinking about different perspectives
- Your point about children completing homework "under parental threat" rather than genuine ownership addresses a real problem many families experience

Incomplete Reasoning → Your paragraph argues that homework teaches responsibility poorly, but you don't fully explain how the alternatives you suggest (chores and classroom roles) would actually develop the same skills that homework supporters value. When you say "true discipline and reinforcement are the domain of skilled teachers," you're making a claim without showing your reasoning. What specifically about the classroom environment makes it better for teaching responsibility? Why would a chore like washing dishes teach better work habits than a homework assignment? Without developing these connections, readers might wonder if you've fully thought through how schools would help children learn time management and commitment.

Exemplar: *"Classroom responsibilities—such as caring for class materials or completing group projects—teach ownership more effectively because teachers can immediately guide students when they struggle, helping them learn from mistakes rather than simply marking work as wrong."*

■ Your piece makes a clear argument and uses research to support your position, which are important strengths for persuasive writing. You've organised your ideas logically, moving from academic evidence to emotional impacts to practical alternatives. However, you could strengthen your writing by developing your ideas more fully in several areas.

When you present evidence, take time to explain exactly what it means and why it matters to your argument. For instance, when mentioning the NSW Department of Education policy, you could add a sentence showing specifically how their guidelines prove your point. Additionally, consider the

complexity of your topic—homework affects different families in different ways, and acknowledging this would make your argument more convincing. You might add a paragraph exploring when homework might be appropriate or what circumstances require different approaches.

Your counter-arguments need stronger development too. When you present the opposing view about discipline, spend more time explaining precisely why your alternatives work better. What happens in a classroom that makes teacher-led learning superior? How do chores build responsibility differently than homework? Also, your paragraph about alternatives (reading, cooking, board games) could benefit from concrete examples. Instead of just listing activities, show readers exactly how measuring ingredients teaches maths or how board games develop critical thinking. Finally, consider addressing practical concerns parents might have: if schools ban homework, how will teachers communicate with families about learning? How will parents know if their child needs extra help? Thinking through these questions would demonstrate that you've considered the full picture.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

#1 Closing the Book on Homework: Why Primary Schools Should Reclaim Childhood

The image is a familiar one in households across Sydney: a young child, slumped over the kitchen table under the glare of a lamp, wrestling with a worksheet. Outside, the evening light fades, but their day of structured learning is far from over. For generations, homework has been an accepted, almost sacred, pillar of education. But as we gain a deeper understanding of child development and effective pedagogy, we must ask a critical question: is this nightly ritual truly serving our youngest learners? ~~The answer, supported by extensive research and the well-being of our children, is a resounding no.~~ [Before examining the research, it's worth considering what this scene reveals about modern childhood. This moment at the kitchen table—repeated in thousands of homes each evening—rarely prompts families to question whether these worksheets genuinely support learning. Yet when we look closely at the evidence, we find compelling reasons to reconsider this nightly ritual. The answer, supported by extensive research and the wellbeing of our children, is a resounding no.] Primary schools should ban traditional homework to foster genuine intellectual curiosity, protect precious family time, and support the holistic development of the child.

#2 The core argument against primary school homework rests on a foundation of logic and evidence. Landmark meta-analyses, led by Duke University professor Harris Cooper, have consistently shown little to no correlation between homework and academic achievement in the primary years. ~~This finding is echoed closer to home in the evolving guidelines from our own educational bodies.~~ [Whilst Cooper's research reveals that homework benefits remain minimal for younger students, he also found that certain approaches—particularly reading for pleasure and brief, focused practice—can support learning when implemented thoughtfully. This nuanced finding is echoed closer to home in the evolving guidelines from our own educational bodies.] The NSW Department of Education's current homework policy, for instance, encourages schools to move beyond "one-size-fits-all" assignments towards more purposeful and flexible learning activities, implicitly acknowledging the limited utility of traditional drills. The reason is simple: young children learn best through play, exploration, and hands-on interaction. After a six-hour school day, their capacity for absorbing abstract concepts from a worksheet is exhausted. True learning is about internalising concepts and developing a passion for knowledge, not simply completing a task for the sake of compliance.

Beyond its academic ineffectiveness, the nightly homework routine exacts a significant emotional toll, creating friction in the very place a child should feel most secure. The pressure to complete assignments often transforms shared family time into a source of stress and conflict, straining the parent-child relationship. This is particularly acute in our fast-paced society, where evenings are a compressed and precious window for connection. For many families, this time is eroded by battles over long division or spelling lists, breeding resentment towards learning itself. Furthermore, this model creates a hidden equity problem. It unfairly advantages students with access to quiet study spaces, resources, and readily available parental support, while their peers may struggle without these privileges, entrenching disadvantage from the earliest years of schooling.

Instead of looking only to international exemplars like Finland, we can find a path forward by examining the principles advocated by our own forward-thinking educators. The shift in official policy signals a growing consensus that learning should not be confined to worksheets. The most valuable "homework" is that which is authentic and integrated into a child's life. This includes nightly reading for pleasure with a parent, a practice universally shown to boost literacy and parent-child bonds. It involves real-world applications of numeracy, like calculating measurements while cooking, or developing critical thinking through a family board game. These activities cultivate creativity, problem-solving, and a healthy life balance—skills far more valuable for a future leader, innovator, or citizen than the ability to complete repetitive drills.

#3 Of course, proponents reasonably argue that homework instils discipline and responsibility, preparing children for future academic demands. It is true that fostering good habits, such as

committing to nightly reading or managing a long-term project, holds immense value. However, this is a far cry from the daily, compulsory worksheets that define homework for many. This model is a poor teacher of responsibility; it is often completed under parental threat, not from a sense of ownership. If a child has not grasped a concept in class, forcing them to struggle alone at home is counterproductive—it cements confusion and fosters anxiety. ~~True discipline and reinforcement are the domain of skilled teachers who can identify and address learning gaps in the supportive environment of the classroom, while responsibility is more authentically taught through age-appropriate chores and classroom roles.~~ [True discipline develops more effectively when teachers can identify and address learning gaps in the supportive environment of the classroom, providing immediate guidance that transforms mistakes into learning opportunities. Similarly, responsibility grows more authentically through age-appropriate chores and classroom roles—such as caring for shared materials or contributing to group projects—because these tasks allow children to experience natural consequences and receive direct mentorship when they struggle, rather than simply receiving a mark on a worksheet.]

In conclusion, the tradition of assigning compulsory, graded homework in primary school is an outdated practice that persists in spite of compelling evidence against it. It undermines the very goals of modern education by stifling curiosity with compliance, replacing family connection with conflict, and ignoring the developmental needs of children. It is time to trust the research, to embrace the progressive direction of our own educational authorities, and to listen to the needs of our families. Let us reclaim our children's evenings to restore joy, balance, and a genuine, lifelong love of learning. It is time to close the book on traditional primary school homework for good.