

"Did your teacher give you your homework packet?" is a question I ask my children often. Every week they get a set of papers that are stapled together, each paper being either a math sheet or a reading and writing sheet. For the longest time, I couldn't get my youngest son to do his daily sheet. The teachers expect the students to do one sheet each afternoon at home. If they concentrate, it hardly takes any time, but, obviously, the longer you wait to do it in the evening, the longer and harder the homework seems to become. I remember those days of putting off the essay or the written exercises, just hoping that by some miracle they would disappear. Oh, the frustration. The way I got my son to do his homework every day was by using a strategy that included three things. First, he wasn't allowed to play on the Wii until he had done one page. Secondly, I would always be near him to help him, encourage him, push him a little if needed. And third, I would praise and congratulate him once he had finished. After a few months of this, he adopted the habit of always getting his job done. I think that being consistent is really one of the hardest things *in life*, especially if you haven't managed to turn your obligation into a habit. At least, that's how it is for me. These homework packets are cute, obviously simple; afterall, he is only in the first grade. On most pages there are cute characters drawn, to make the sheet look friendly and fun. And a lot of the exercises are in the form of a game, or a puzzle. You find things like dot-to-dots, crossword puzzles, and counting pennies exercises. It's great to see my son's progress, and I realize that it was worth using strategies to get him to 'dig in' and get the work done.

Grammar notes.

Use of 'used to' and 'would' to show past habitual actions, + related vocabulary: to dig in, strategy, to adopt a habit, to staple.

1. That boy was a great student when he was in my class. He used to dig into any new information and tasks.
2. The special ops commander would always outline his strategy of surprizing the enemy.
3. They used to adopt these unhealthy eating habits, like having icecream or cheesecake just before bed. But then, the doctor told them that they couldn't continue that way.
4. The secretary would always use too many staples on the documents; it was difficult to turn the pages.