



My Dog Ate It...The Internet and Other Useful Canadian Homework Tools

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Photos by Kate Bustin

Ah, homework. That constant uphill battle all youth are forced to face from ages five to eighteen – and it only gets worse in university. Parents are not usually helpful with it either: they did the material too long ago; the curriculum has changed since their day; they want to encourage independence; they are just plain too busy to help. The sheer amount of homework today's teens are faced with doesn't help matters; it's no surprise that Toronto students demanded stricter homework consistency rules for Greater Toronto school boards (Rushowy, 2007).

Fortunately, the youth of today are blessed with amazing resources that can save the migraines of attempting to understand math problems, the endless hours in the library amid old books in the search for English paper sources, and all those tears spilled over the conjugation of French verbs. Tutorials, librarian chat options, and database search engines are all useful ways for the struggling student to avoid that ever-tempting forbidden fruit

Wikipedia...but where to begin? Online tutorials are next to impossible to access without handing over a credit card number and a heavy sigh (Kalb, 2007). 'Ask a librarian' options are only available when the library is actually open. The following tools are tried-and-tested, and uniquely Canadian (remember, we use the metric system here!).

Self-Help

The following resources are self-explanatory: step-by-step guides, activities, and other online tools that students can use on their own.

Allô prof

This Quebec-based website is an entirely French-language guide to homework help. One particularly helpful tool is the virtual French library it provides. Online discussion forums (in French, of course) are also available, although students should use these with a degree of caution; no credentials are guaranteed from those involved in the discussions.

Available at: <http://www.alloprof.qc.ca/>

Archived – The Learning Centre

Library and Archives Canada has compiled a very comprehensive list of helpful homework sites. The sites are divided according to subject – Art, History, Information Science, Music, etc. – and are clearly labeled according to age-appropriateness. As an archived page, *The Learning Centre* will not be updated, however, it will also not have any material removed.

Available at:

<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/education/008-2011-e.html>

The Basic Physics and Equations Formula Sheet

This guide, available to download for free in .pdf format, provides high school students with a detailed, comprehensive list of the formulas and equations they will need to survive physics. Although it doesn't go into much detail in terms of how to solve each formula, it is broken down into subjects such as "Newtonian Mechanics" and "Waves and Optics," helping students find the formulas they need quickly and easily.

Available at:

http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/ap/students/physics/info_equation_tables_2002.pdf

The Canadian Encyclopedia: The Homework Zone

The Homework Zone offers advice on writing citations, note taking, grammar and punctuation, and more! The advice can be saved as a .pdf, and is comprehensive, detailed, and accurate. Of course, hand in hand with this guide is the *Canadian Encyclopedia* itself – all online, free to use, and very, very useful as a starting point for school projects. The CE offers quizzes, timelines, and interactive resources to help teens survive high school, and is highly recommended by the *Toronto Star* (2007).

Available at:

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=AboutThisSite&Params=A1>

HomeworkHelper.ca

This website is a very useful starting point when looking for answers. Depending on the subject, it offers up many different websites teens can look through, whether they are trying to learn how Einstein came

to prove his landmark equation, or determine how Canada fared in the 2004 Summer Olympics.

Available at:

<http://www.homeworkhelper.ca/>

Science.gc.ca Activity Book!

Available for free .pdf download from the Government of Canada website, these guides are available for all grades. These are best for extra-curricular work, science fair ideas, and general practice with experiments rather than last-minute homework questions; however, the experiments provided are interesting, fun, and very educational. A corresponding answer guide is also available for anyone who needs it.

Available at:

<http://www.science.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=715A9E1D-1>

TVOKids

Based on the core areas of Ontario curriculum, TVOKids is not, as the name implies, just for kids: the tools and resources are very useful for teens as well (Canada NewsWire, 2011). Starting with a broad subject, users can then narrow things down to a specific topic or question to discover videos, quizzes, interactive exercises, and study tips.

Available at: <http://www.tvokids.com/>

Interactive Help:

Before selecting any form of online tutorials or interactive homework help, it is very important to consider the following:

- What is the tutor's certification?

- How detailed is the tutor's background check?
- Is this tutor Canadian (or more locally) based?
- How many students is the tutor managing at once?
- How much does the service cost? (Michaelson, 2009)

The Independent Learning Centre

Although the IDC's primary concern is distance learning, they do provide online chat options with Ontario-certified junior high and high school teachers. The IDC also provides other highly useful homework resources, such as a scientific calculator tool, a periodic table, a science and math glossary, and virtual seminars that students can watch for additional help.

Available at:

<http://www.ilc.org/aat/index.php>

LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network)

LEARN is a non-profit organization that offers tutorials to students that span a wide variety of curriculum – everything from the arts to professional development; languages to math; even sex education.

Available at:

<http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/curriculum/>



Resources:

Homework sites to help save the day (Ontario edition). (2007). *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/docview/439304422/fulltext?accountid=10406>

Do you and your kids need help with homework? (2011). *Canada NewsWire*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/docview/1026565712/fulltext?accountid=10406>

Michaelson, J. (2009). Online homework help: Evaluating the online options. *Young Adult Library Services* 7(2), 25-28. Retrieved from http://yalsa.ala.org/yals/yalsarchive/volume7/7n2_winter2009.pdf

Kalb, P. E. (2007). Cranky consumer: Finding online homework for kids; We seek an answer to a pizza problem; Ignored by Dr. Math. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/docview/399063970>

Rushowy, K. (2007). Homework overload under microscope; Teen trustees make case to help stressed students. *Toronto Star*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/docview/439235871/fulltext?accountid=10>