S4 STUDY SKILLS · FREE PARENT TOOL

The Five-Question Check

About ninety seconds. Works on any assignment, in any subject. Ask about the work, not about who wrote it.

1	**"Explain the argument to me in two sentences, like you are telling a friend."**	**Do they know the point of the work?**
2	**"Define this word for me."** Pick a term from their own paper.	**Are the words on the page theirs?**
3	**"Why did you choose this example?"**	**Did they build the argument?**
4	**"What did you leave out?"**	**Did they make real choices?**
5	**"What would you change if you had one more day?"**	**Do they see the work's weak spots?**

What their answers mean

What you hear	What it usually means	Your next move
Explains it in their own words, stumbles here and there	They wrote it, or they had help and understood it	Say so. Ask what was hardest, then let it go.
Summarizes well, cannot define a term from their own paper	They may have used AI and skimmed the result	Ask where the word came from. Work through the meaning together.
Cannot say why an example is in there	They did not build the argument themselves	Return to what the assignment asked for. Have them rebuild that section.
Explains everything except one section that reads differently	Part of the work may not be theirs	Ask about that section alone. Leave the rest out of it.
Gets defensive before you finish the question	Could be guilt, could be a rough week	Stop the questions. Ask how the class is going instead.

Three rules for the parent: ask when nobody is tired, so Sunday afternoon rather than 10 p.m.; sound curious rather than suspicious, because your child hears it in the first three words; and stop once you have your answer. A check tells you whether your child understands what they turned in, which is the part that shows up on the next test.

What to say next

Separate the tool from the dishonesty. Using AI is allowed in some classes. Turning in work that is not yours, in a class that forbids it, is the part to address.

Start here, not with the punishment

- **Name what the assignment was for.** "This one was practice at building an argument. What did skipping that cost you?"
- **Check the class rule together.** Open the syllabus before deciding anything. Some teachers allow AI for brainstorming or checking work.
- **Decide on repair, not just consequence.** Redoing the work in their own words teaches what the assignment was meant to teach.
- **Pick your moment.** Nothing useful gets decided at 10 p.m. on a school night.

If a class rule was broken, your child tells the teacher

> "I used AI on part of this assignment and I should not have. I would like to redo it."

Let them send it or say it themselves, with you nearby. Handling it rebuilds more than a rewritten essay does.

Your family's AI rule

Keep it to three lines, short enough that a 13-year-old can repeat them from memory. Fill this in together and read it out loud.

What AI may do	
What AI may not do	
When to say you used it	
We will review this on	

A starting point: AI may explain something after you have tried it, quiz you, or help you plan. AI may not write any part of what you hand in. Say you used it whenever the teacher asks, and whenever you are unsure.

When to look past the assignment

Nightly AI use usually traces back to something else: a content gap, most often in math; a schedule with no room in it; or trouble getting started, which is an executive function problem rather than a motivation problem.

Not sure which one you are looking at?

S4 Study Skills works with students in Fairfield County and Westchester on the skills underneath the grades. **Book a consultation** or call 203-307-5455.

Sources: OpenAI (2023); Weber-Wulff et al. (2023); Van Vlasselaer et al. (2026); Liang et al. (2023); Turnitin guidance; CDT (2025); Pew (2026).