

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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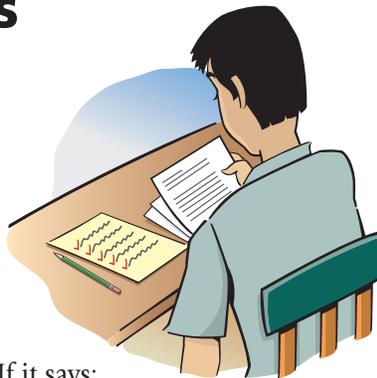
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Educational Service Unit 10

Five steps help teens manage essay test questions

Essay questions frequently appear on final exams. But these questions don't have to be intimidating! For many teens, it helps to break an essay down into three parts: the introduction, the body (a few paragraphs) and the conclusion.

When your teen has to answer an essay question, encourage him to follow these five steps:



1. Read the question for key words.

- If it says:
- *Discuss*—he should make factual observations about the topic.
 - *Describe*—he should give specific details about the subject matter.
 - *Show*—he should state his idea or opinion and support it with facts.
 - *Explain*—he should offer fact-based causes or reasons for something.

2. Write a rough outline

of his ideas about the topic.

3. Write the introduction. This should be a brief explanation of what the essay is about. Your teen should use the third person (*he, she, it* or *they*) unless he is instructed to use the first person (*I*).

4. Write the body of the essay. Each paragraph should answer a specific part of the question and should include: a topic sentence stating the point, information supporting the topic sentence and a closing sentence.

5. Write the conclusion. This should be a summary of your teen's answer to the original question and how his points support his position.



Discover solutions that will keep your teen's school attendance strong

Attendance is essential for school success. So if your teen wants to stay home from school frequently, you need to find out why and take action. Here are some common reasons teens miss school (and what to do about them):

- **Fatigue.** Teens need a lot of sleep—but between school, homework, extracurricular activities and jobs, they don't always get it. Instead of letting your teen sleep in to "catch up," encourage her to stick to a reasonable sleep schedule—even on weekends.
- **Incomplete assignments.** Ask your teen why she didn't finish the work. Is she having trouble in the class? Have her ask the teacher about options for extra help. Is your teen too busy to get everything done? Work together to reevaluate her priorities.
- **Other students.** Is your teen being bullied? If so, let the school know. Does she feel lonely? Encourage her to join a club or team. These are great ways to meet people with shared interests.

Instill a sense of integrity

When we act with *integrity*, we act based on our beliefs about what is right and wrong. If your teen acts inappropriately, teach him about integrity by helping him think through his choice. Ask questions like:

- **What got in the way** of doing what you knew was right?
- **Would you have acted** differently if you had been with different people?

When your teen faces a tough decision, encourage him to ask himself: Will this action build up or hurt my integrity?

Source: M. Riera, Ph.D., *Staying Connected to Your Teenager*, Perseus Books Group.

A résumé helps get the job



Is your teen thinking about a summer job? Encourage her to write a résumé. Even teens who have never held a job have a lot to offer. Does your

teen know how to use a certain computer program? Has she volunteered? Have her look online for résumé writing guides. When she's written a draft, review it together.

Don't protect your teen from learning

If you try to save your teen from all pain and suffering, you can wind up preventing her from learning life skills she'll need as an adult. To avoid overprotecting your teen:



- **Don't rescue her** from small problems. If she left her geometry notebook at home, don't drive it to school. She'll have to figure something out.
- **Give her responsibilities** at home. Teach her how to make her own medical appointments, do her own laundry and follow a budget.

Source: J. Nelsen and L. Lott, *Positive Discipline for Teenagers*, Three Rivers Press.



How can I encourage my teen to read more?

Q: My daughter doesn't like to read—for school or for pleasure. I know reading is important, but I don't know how to get her to do it. What can I do to motivate her?

A: You are right that reading is important. Reading is a foundation skill for learning. And like any skill, it gets better with practice. If you want your teen to read well, you have to encourage her to read a lot.

Here are some strategies to try:

- **Focus on quantity,** not quality. Any reading your teen does is good. So if she would rather read about her favorite pop star than open up a classic novel, don't worry. Just keep lots of reading material handy. Supply magazines, graphic novels or even how-to books on topics that might interest your teen.
- **Read with her.** Cut out or forward an article you think your teen might enjoy and then discuss it with her later. Offer to read the book she's reading for English and then talk about it.
- **Try nonfiction.** Look for books and articles she might find intriguing—on topics from deep-sea diving to space travel and anything in between.
- **Get her laughing.** Many teens enjoy reading things that are funny. Your teen's sense of humor may not be the same as yours, but if it motivates her to keep reading, humor can be a great thing!



Stay engaged for success

Research has shown that parent involvement has a positive effect on academic success. As the year winds down, it's important to keep up your involvement in your teen's education. Here are some ways:

- **Keep an eye** on your teen's progress. Contact her teachers if you have any questions or concerns.
- **Urge your teen** to get help before final exams if her grades start to slip.
- **Attend a meeting** of the school parent organization.

Show your teen that education matters!

Consistent consequences improve discipline

It's one of the contradictions of discipline: The more consistently you apply consequences, the less you have to do it.



If you enforce rules inconsistently, your teen learns that rules are more like suggestions. He's more likely to argue about them. But if you apply consequences every time, your teen knows what to expect if he breaks the rules. And he's more likely to follow them, at home and at school.

Learning is about more than just grades

When many parents ask their teens about school, what they really want to find out about is their grades. Grades matter, but remember that the learning process is just as critical. So ask your teen:

- **About the book** she's reading.
- **About her most recent test.** Does she think it was a good way to measure how well she knew the material?
- **If she's had any experiences** that changed her way of thinking.

Source: M. Riera, Ph.D., *Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teenagers*, Ten Speed Press.



Are you preparing your teen to stay safe on prom night?

Prom is a night for gowns, tuxes and dancing. But for many teens, it is also a night for underage drinking and other risky behaviors. Are you doing all you can to ensure your teen has a safe prom night? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you know** what your teen will do, with whom and where, on prom night?
- ___ **2. Does your teen** have a curfew for prom night?
- ___ **3. Have you had** a frank talk with your teen about sex and your family's values?
- ___ **4. Have you talked** with your teen about the dangers of underage drinking? Role-play ways he can say *no* to alcohol.
- ___ **5. Will you** or another parent be available to pick up teens in case something goes wrong?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean your teen will likely have a safe prom. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"We cannot protect our children from life. Therefore, it is essential to prepare them for it."

—Rudolf Dreikurs

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