

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

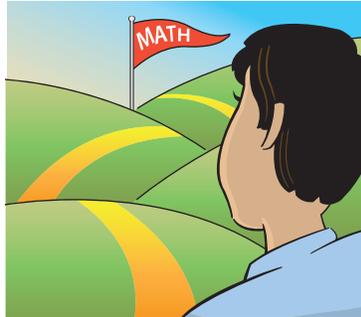


February 2017

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## Daily study habits can ease your teen's road to math success

Math jobs are on the rise. By 2024, experts estimate that there will be 43,000 more math-related jobs than there were in 2014. But only about 25 percent of high school seniors score proficient or higher in math.



There's no single "magic secret" that will make your teen excel in math. But there are things he can do to improve his chances of success. Share these math studying tips with your teen and encourage him to:

- **Study math every day.** Math learning builds on itself. Your teen should complete homework each night and avoid missing classes.
- **Take notes in class**—and review them each evening. Suggest that your teen write down any questions he has and ask the teacher about them the following day.
- **Ask questions in class.** Remind your teen that if he is confused about how to solve a problem, others in the class may feel the same way.
- **Study old quizzes, tests and assignments.** This will help your teen remember the steps he used to solve each problem. There may be similar problems on the next test.
- **Solve sample problems.** Your teen can find them in his textbook, or he can ask the teacher for sample tests he can take.

Source: "Math Occupations," Occupational Outlook Handbook, Bureau of Labor Statistics, [nswc.com/mathjobs](http://nswc.com/mathjobs); "2015 Mathematics & Reading Assessments," The Nation's Report Card, National Assessment of Educational Progress, [nswc.com/mathgrade](http://nswc.com/mathgrade).



## For better grades, try a little kindness

Research suggests that happy students tend to earn better grades. And what makes them happy? Supportive relationships. Studies have also shown that people who are actively kind to others are happier than those who aren't.

To help your teen build supportive relationships, teach him to be:

- **Compassionate.** He should put himself in other people's shoes, even if he isn't directly involved.
- **Grateful.** Help your teen recognize other people's contributions.
- **Considerate.** Help him think of others' feelings, needs and wants.
- **Forgiving.** Encourage your teen not to dwell on the past.

Remind your teen to avoid being cruel and to think before he speaks about how his words could affect others. For example, if a classmate says, "My binder broke!" your teen's reply should *not* be, "And?"

Source: L. Schiller and C. Hinton, "Happier Students Get Higher Grades in School, Research Says," *Time*, [nswc.com/happy](http://nswc.com/happy); K. Otake and others, "Happy People Become Happier Through Kindness," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, [nswc.com/happy\\_kind](http://nswc.com/happy_kind).

## Teens still need parenting

Your teen may be racing toward adulthood, but she's not there yet. She still needs your support. To stay connected with your teen:

- **Eat a meal together** every day.
- **Listen to her.** Acknowledge what your teen is saying without passing judgment.
- **Open your home** (and fridge) to her friends, so she'll want to stay close by.

## Offer praise that motivates

The right kind of praise can inspire a teen to keep striving. But endless repetition of "good job" won't do the trick. Here are three things that will:



1. **Tie praise to specific actions.** "You used the teacher's comments to revise your essay. Including additional examples made your argument much stronger."
2. **Do it privately.** A quiet word to your teen in the car will mean more to her than a public "Isn't my child great?"
3. **Focus attention** on your teen's own good feelings. "How did it feel to turn in a paper you knew you'd improved?"

Source: R. Lavoie, *The Motivation Breakthrough: 6 Secrets to Turning On the Tuned-Out Child*, Touchstone Books.

## Say 'no' to e-cigarettes

In a survey sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 16.2 % of high school seniors reported using e-cigarettes in the previous month. More than half said they did it to "see what it's like."



Teens who use e-cigarettes are more likely to start smoking other tobacco products than those who don't. Be sure to talk with your teen about the dangers of tobacco use. Make it clear to him that when you say "no smoking" you mean "no vaping," too.

Source: "Teens and E-cigarettes," National Institute on Drug Abuse, [nswc.com/e-cig](http://nswc.com/e-cig).



## How can I make sure my teen stays awake in class?

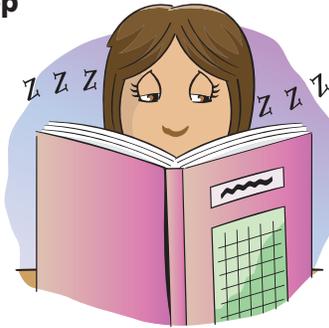
**Q:** My daughter has been falling asleep in her first period class. She says the class is boring, and the early hour just knocks her out. What should I do about it?

**A:** Studies on the sleep patterns of teens have shown that most teens are not morning people by nature. But they have to get up and get to school anyway.

When your teen sleeps in class, she misses explanations and is more likely to struggle with the material. And if she asks for extra help, her teacher may wonder why she didn't bother to pay attention the first time.

Work with your teen to come up with ways to help her stay awake during class. Here are some ideas to consider:

- **Enforce an earlier bedtime.** Your teen may not like it. But since she isn't meeting her morning responsibilities, she needs more sleep. Don't let her charge her phone in her room at night—she'll be tempted to check it.
- **Help your teen plan** her homework time. By using small bits of "free" time during the day, she may be able to finish earlier in the evening.
- **Encourage your teen to take action in class.** She should ask the teacher if she can sit in the front of the room. Challenge your teen to ask a question in class every day—she'll have to pay attention to know what to ask.



## Are you helping your teen work with a demanding teacher?

High school teachers expect a lot from students—and some are more demanding than others. Are you helping your teen rise to this challenge? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you discussed** your teen's goals for the class? If he wants a good grade, he'll have to work with the teacher.
- \_\_\_ **2. Have you brainstormed** with your teen about things he can do to show his desire to learn (arrive prepared and on time, ask questions, etc.)?
- \_\_\_ **3. Have you told** your teen that he'll have to deal with exacting people all his life?
- \_\_\_ **4. Have you helped** your teen see himself as a capable student who works hard?

- \_\_\_ **5. Have you urged** your teen to talk to his counselor if he has issues with a teacher?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your teen work things out. For each no, try that idea.*

*"The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year."*

—John Foster Dulles

## Study strategies that work

There may be as many learning strategies as there are students. But research says two common study techniques are highly effective when teens are preparing for tests:

- 1. Practice testing.** Activities such as making up tests and taking them, and answering questions in the textbook enhance learning and retention by making students actively recall information.
- 2. Spreading study sessions out.** Reviewing the same material in multiple sessions with time in between is more effective than one cram session or a couple of back-to-back sessions.

Source: J. Dunlosky and others, "Improving Students' Learning With Effective Learning Techniques: Promising Directions From Cognitive and Educational Psychology," Association for Psychological Science, [niswc.com/techniques](http://niswc.com/techniques).

## Promote creative thinking

Some high school students lose enthusiasm for learning. They may find it harder to be creative or take intellectual risks at school than they did when they were younger.

To revive your teen's love of learning, ask him to help you solve problems around the house. (Can he make a squirrel-proof bird feeder?) There's no downside to being wrong, and he'll build problem-solving skills.

## Shine light on expectations

When you set high expectations for your teen, you provide her with a beacon to help her find her way. To make sure your expectations are clear:



- **Discuss future goals.** Then help your teen plan ways to make them a reality.
- **Talk about the link** between *effort* and *outcome*. Tell your teen you care more that she do her best than that she get all A's.
- **Ask your teen to create routines** for homework and chores. This shows you believe she can get things done by herself.

### Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1527-103x