

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



January 2017

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Suggest New Year's resolutions that refocus your teen on school

Happy New Year! January is a great time to take stock of your teen's progress in school. Are her grades where she—and you—would like them to be? If not, encourage your teen to make some learning resolutions.

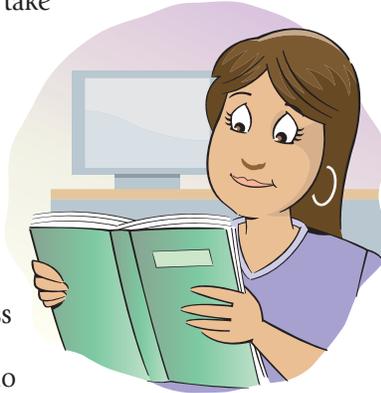
Here are three to start with:

1. Get to class on time every day.

Teachers can't teach students who aren't in class. Your teen may have done her history reading, but if she misses the class itself, she'll miss the teacher's emphasis and the discussion. She may be able to do her math homework, but unless she's in class, she won't see the alternate way the teacher shows for finding an answer.

2. Read for pleasure. There's no question that teens benefit from reading. Unfortunately, according to studies collected by Common Sense Media, teens are reading less now than they did in the 1990s. So encourage your teen to read often, and help her find reading materials she likes.

3. Cut down on screen time. Surveys show that most teens spend more than six hours a day using screen media. Heavy screen media users are more likely to have lower grades than those who are only occasional users. Have your teen put down her phone and turn off the TV for an hour or two. She can use the time to read, study, be active or just relax with you.



Source: "Children, Teens, and Reading," Common Sense Media, niscw.com/teen-read; "Landmark Report: U.S. Teens Use an Average of Nine Hours of Media Per Day, Tweens Use Six Hours," Common Sense Media, niscw.com/screen-media.



Discipline without using scare tactics

You want your teen to be safe. So when he rolls his eyes when you mention seat belts, it's tempting to shout, "If you don't wear a seat belt and there's an accident, you will be thrown out of the car and you will break your neck!"

But keep in mind that teens don't always think the same way parents do—and that's why scare tactics don't work.

Teens are better at processing what is going on in the here and now than they are at thinking about abstract information. They understand that bad things could happen when they do something wrong—but they think those bad things will happen only to other people.

A direct statement—"If you're not wearing your seat belt, I'm taking away your driving privileges"—will be more effective than a scare tactic.

Scare tactics can also cause your teen to lose respect for your advice. If you always respond with a scary story, he is likely to stop discussing serious issues with you. So, listen to your teen's concerns and give him reasonable explanations for why you feel the way you do.

Convey the value of school

The school year is no longer new, but your teen still needs you to take a daily, active interest in her education. Make it a point to:

- **Emphasize that learning** is a priority in your family.
- **Talk to her** about what she wants to do after graduation. Discuss ways that education can help her achieve her dreams.

Make time for what matters

Does your teen run from one activity to the next without any time for dinner, let alone homework? Sit down with him and review his schedule. If he's overloaded:



- **Have your teen rank** his activities in order from *most important* to *least important*. Schoolwork should come first!
- **Discuss which** of the least important activities your teen would be willing to take a break from or drop completely.
- **Remind your teen** that he needs sleep and good nutrition to stay healthy.

Source: R. Giesler, "How to Tell if Your Teen is Over-Scheduled," Children's Hospital Los Angeles, niscw.com/time.

Spending choices teach financial literacy

To become responsible adults, teens must learn to manage, save and spend money wisely. So, when your teen asks you for pricey jeans, don't say *yes* (or *no*). Instead:



- **Give her** a clothing allowance and let *her* decide how to spend it.
- **Ask her** if she'd rather have one pair of expensive jeans, or two tops and a less costly pair of jeans.
- **Remind her** that when the money's gone, it's gone.

Regardless of her decision, your teen will learn a lesson in financial self-discipline.



How can I stay connected to my teen if he's never home?

Q: My son is a junior. He and his friends now have driver's licenses. That means we rarely see him. Even on school nights, he heads out to "study" with friends. I'm worried—and I miss him! What should I do?

A: Teens often place more emphasis on spending time with friends than they did when they were younger—but that doesn't mean that family time isn't important to them, too. Teens need their parents to provide guidance about values, and advice on everything from school to dating and sex to drugs and alcohol.

So if your son is never home, it's time to:

- **Get the details.** Where is he going? Who will be there? Will there be adult supervision?
- **Limit the number of nights** he can go out each week. This isn't to keep him away from his friends, but to make sure he has family time, too.
- **Set a curfew on school nights** that is early enough so that even if he goes out, you will still get some time to connect.
- **Host study groups.** If your teen is studying with others, offer to let them meet at your home.
- **Plan ways to reconnect.** Schedule some time with your teen to do something you both enjoy.



Are you promoting social media safety?

Social media networks like Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook are primary means of communication for teens today. Are you making sure your teen uses social media safely? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about the dangers of sharing personal information? Review her privacy settings.
- ___ **2. Do you insist** that your teen include you in her social media networks?
- ___ **3. Have you discussed** why she should not post inappropriate photographs or comments about drugs, alcohol and risky behaviors?
- ___ **4. Do you limit** when, where and for how long your teen may use social media?

- ___ **5. Have you let** your teen know you will monitor her computer and cell phone use?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen stay safe online. For each no, try that idea.

"Loving a child doesn't mean giving in to all his whims; to love him is to bring out the best in him, to teach him to love what is difficult."

—Nadia Boulanger

A sticky trick to remember

Most teens don't read a long assignment in one sitting. And many forget what they've already read when they resume reading.

Before your teen takes a break, have him write a short summary on a sticky note and put it where he stops reading. Later, it will help him pick up his train of thought.

Put study on the schedule

Creating a study schedule will help your teen prepare to do her best on tests. Share these tips for study planning:



- **Use a calendar.** Your teen can't study during classes or activities, or while she's doing homework. Have her block out those times on a calendar. Then she can see the time still available for study.
- **Block out enough time.** It will take longer to study for a test if your teen has to learn material she missed, or if she doesn't understand a concept.
- **Plan time to review.** She should plan to study the material for several days, then review it the night before the test.

Source: R. Flippo, *Preparing Students for Testing and Doing Better in School*, Corwin Press.

Expect respect for teachers

Most students want to be treated with respect. But many admit that they don't extend that same respect to their teachers. Let your teen know that you expect him to:

- **Pay attention in class.** Listening attentively shows the teacher he respects her and values the education he's getting.
- **Use manners.** He should follow requests with *please* and thank teachers for help.
- **Be positive.** Urge him to follow the rule, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything."

Source: "School Voice Report 2016," Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations, Teacher Voice and Aspirations International Center and Corwin Press, niswc.com/voice.

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.

Copyright © 2017, The Parent Institute®, a division of PaperClip Media, Inc.

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

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-103x