

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



May 2017

Title 1 Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit #10

## Plan ways to make this a summer of reading for your teen

The more high school students read, the bigger their vocabularies grow and the more background knowledge they gain to help them understand what they read. Reading for pleasure counts. So, even if your teen doesn't have assigned reading this summer, make sure she spends time reading for herself.



To motivate your teen to read:

- **Help her find the pleasure** in pleasure reading. Your teen may discover that there are things she actually enjoys reading. Encourage her to sample a wide variety of reading—an article about someone she admires, a book on pet training, even a comic book. Whatever she likes, be sure she keeps reading.
- **Let her choose her own books.** During the school year, your teen has to read assigned books. During the summer, she's in charge. Take her to the library to browse for titles that catch her interest.
- **Use reading to connect on a new level.** Let your teen know you are aware she is getting older by sharing and discussing reading material on more mature subjects. You might also pass along a book you enjoyed.
- **Read young adult books together.** You may get a different view of the way teens think. These books can spark interesting conversations.
- **Set a good example.** As with so many things, your example is a powerful teacher. So let your teen see you reading often.



## Now is the time to prepare for exams

Final exams are around the corner, and your teen will do himself a favor if he starts preparing sooner rather than later. Suggest that he:

- **Stock up on supplies.** Ask your teen what he needs to study effectively—note cards, sticky notes, highlighters, etc. Now is the time for him to get them.
- **Ask his teachers** what to focus on when studying. A comment like, "Remember how often we referred to the concepts in Chapter 10?" can be very helpful.
- **Get organized.** Your teen will have an easier time reviewing if

he puts his notes and handouts in one place in an order that makes sense to him.

- **Create a study plan.** Encourage your teen to block out time for studying and completing other year-end tasks like term papers.

To help your teen prepare, make sure he has a quiet place to study and gets enough sleep before tests.

Source: Gwynne, "Study Tips for Final Exams!" Sylvan Learning, [niswc.com/finals](http://niswc.com/finals).

## Small moments build bonds

May's activities—projects, papers, athletic events, end-of-year celebrations—can make a busy student's schedule even more hectic. To make sure you connect with your teen, look for opportunities to talk while she's:

- **Eating.** Chat while sharing a meal.
- **Studying.** Offer to quiz her.
- **In the car with you.** Ask her how things are going.

## Summer jobs let teens try careers on for size

Summer jobs are a great way for teens to learn responsibility and get a taste of a career. Is your teen thinking about becoming a veterinarian? A job at an animal shelter will let him see what it's like to work with animals. A future teacher might want to try working with kids at a summer camp.



Sometimes these experiences teach teens that their career ideas need revising. That's OK. It's better for your teen to learn that now while he still has time to pursue education that will let him go in a different direction.

## Establish healthy habits

Without the routines of school, many teens are tempted to spend the summer staying up late, eating foods like pizza and relaxing on the couch. But that isn't healthy. This summer, help your teen make better choices. Stock up on nutritious snacks. And encourage your teen to get in:



- **At least eight hours** of sleep a night.
- **Two and a half cups** of vegetables and two cups of fruit a day.
- **At least 20 minutes** of physical activity every day.

Source: "SuperTracker," USDA, [niswc.com/tracker](http://niswc.com/tracker).

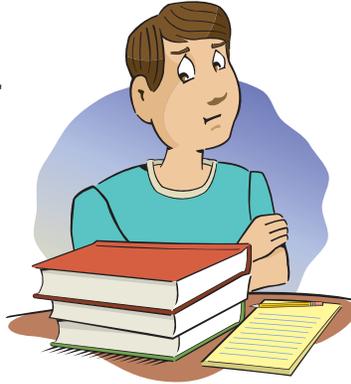


## How can I know what's going on if my teen won't tell me?

**Q:** My son and I used to talk all the time. But in the last few months he has started rolling his eyes whenever I ask him about school or anything else. I want to stay involved, but he barely speaks to me. What can I do?

**A:** You are right to want to stay involved—experts agree that parent involvement has a positive effect on school success.

If you have no evidence that your son is in trouble or participating in risky behavior, he is likely going through a normal phase. When he was a toddler, he shouted *no* and threw tantrums. Now he rolls his eyes. The things you did then will, with some adjusting, probably work now, too.



- **Don't take it personally.** Your teen is trying to carve out a more independent life. And while he knows that he still needs you, he's not about to admit it. So stay calm. Don't answer his attitude with anger.
- **Enforce limits.** Don't allow your son to be disrespectful. The rules still apply: He can't insult you or yell at you, and he must be polite. If he can't abide by these rules, tell him you won't listen to what he has to say.
- **Let him know** that you will always be on his side. For now, let him find his own way—chances are that way will bring him back to you.
- **Stay in touch with his teachers** and guidance counselor, so you'll know if your son is struggling at school.

### Parent Quiz

## Are you standing firm on discipline?

You set a rule for your teen. But then you hear it: "It's not fair! Nobody else's parents make them do this!" Are you handling pushback from your teen without becoming a pushover? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you insist** that your teen have a regular curfew?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you discuss** your rules with your teen before you set them, then stand firm?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you impose** and enforce consequences consistently when your teen breaks a rule?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you stand firm** on rules even when you know your teen will be angry?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you understand** that it is more important for you to be your teen's parent than her best friend?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean that you are not easily pushed over. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.*

“Without question, what you do at home ... makes all the difference when it comes to what kind of student your child will be.”

—Vicki Poretta and Marian Edelman Borden

## Map the way to improved geography skills

The internet gives students access to people and information from all over the world. But does your teen realize that his friend in Frankfort is in Kentucky, not Frankfurt, Germany? To help him strengthen his geography skills, challenge your teen to:

- **Map his social network.** Which of his friends live closest? Farthest away?
- **Use a city map** and a bus or train schedule to plan a trip from home to a point of interest via public transportation.
- **Use a topographic map** to plan a hike. He should note the elevations and geographic features along the route.

## Let your teen tutor you

Motivate your teen to learn more about a subject by asking her to teach it to you. For example, you might ask her to teach you to solve her trigonometry problems. Take the tutoring seriously—show her the respect that a teacher deserves.



Your teen will have to do some in-depth learning to teach you. She'll gain confidence. And you'll learn something new!

## Get set for a sober summer

Surveys show that teens are more likely to try drugs and alcohol for the first time during the summer than during the school year.

Talk with your teen about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Explain that teens under the influence do things they would never do otherwise. Let him know that you expect him to stay clean and sober, and discuss ways to resist pressure to experiment.

Then set limits. Make sure your teen knows when he must be home. Suggest that he use you as an excuse: "I can't—my parents are waiting for me."

Source: "Prevention," National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, [nisd.com/prevention](http://nisd.com/prevention).

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