

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

## Effective class notes give your teen a built-in tool for studying

Ask high school students if they take notes in class, and most will tell you they do. But look in their notebooks and you'll probably see lots of doodles and random words.

Students who can capture lectures and discussions in their notes have a valuable review tool at test time. And studies show that those who take handwritten notes remember material longer than those who use a computer. The Cornell system is one effective method of note-taking. Share its steps with your teen:



- 1. Before class:** Draw a line down a piece of notebook paper, about 2 inches from the margin, creating two columns. Then draw a horizontal line a few inches up from the bottom of the page.
- 2. During class:** Take notes in the right column, writing down the ideas as the teacher presents them. Skip lines to show the end of an idea. Use abbreviations for commonly used words.
- 3. After class:** Review the notes. Then, in the left column, write a phrase, date or question that conveys the main idea in the material to the right. At the bottom of the page, write a brief summary of the points on the page.

When it's time to study, your teen can cover up the right column. Using the phrases in the left column as a reminder, she should restate the information in the right column. Then she can study the page summary.

Source: "The Cornell Note-taking System," Cornell University Learning Strategies Center, [niswc.com/cornell](http://niswc.com/cornell); R.L. Hotz, "Can Handwriting Make You Smarter?" The Wall Street Journal, [niswc.com/pen](http://niswc.com/pen).



## A strong work ethic gets the job done

A strong work ethic—a set of values that include reliability, dedication and pride in one's work—not only helps teens succeed in school, it is an essential part of being career-ready.

Many managers say that today's teens aren't as employable as teens were in the past. Some teens act as if the work is beneath them, do the bare minimum or lack responsibility.

To foster a work ethic that will serve your teen in the classroom and the workplace:

- **Be a role model.** Show your teen that you take your job seriously. Keep a positive attitude.
- **Give him responsibilities.** Assign chores. Expect your teen to be responsible for his actions. If he misses a deadline, for example, it is his responsibility to talk with the teacher about a solution.
- **Stress delayed gratification.** Remind your teen that he should work first and then play. Expect him to finish his paper before he goes out with his friends.

## First, read the pictures

Graphics in textbooks are there for a reason. "Reading" these visuals will give your teen a head start on reading the text.



When looking at a chart, photo, graph or other visual, your teen should ask himself: Why is this here? What does it show? How does it relate to the text? Does it make it easier to create a mental picture of the material?

## Sleep is vital for learning

Research shows it's just as important for your teen to get a good night's rest after a day of learning as it is the night before a test. Here's what you can do to help her wake up ready to learn:

- **Promote a bedtime routine.** Dimming the lights and avoiding bright screens right before bed can make it easier to fall asleep.
- **Don't let your teen sleep** all weekend. Limit sleeping-in to two hours past normal wake up time.
- **Encourage exercise.** Exercise—completed at least a few hours before bed—will help your teen sleep soundly.

Source: "Teens and Sleep," National Sleep Foundation, [niswc.com/zzzz](http://niswc.com/zzzz).

## Teach steps to smart choices

The part of your teen's brain that deals with impulse control won't be mature until he's in his 20s. To help him think through his decisions now, teach him to:



- 1. Identify** the problem.
- 2. Think** of as many solutions as possible.
- 3. List** the positive and negative outcomes for each solution.
- 4. Make** the decision and carry it out.
- 5. Evaluate.** Did his solution work? What changes should he make next time?

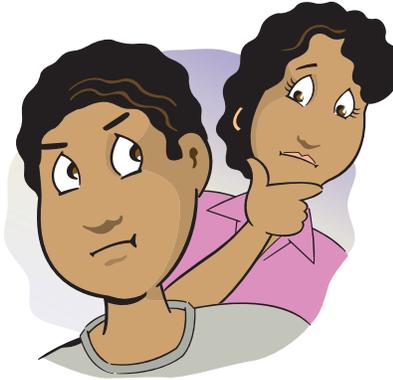


## Is it too late to teach my teen how to behave?

**Q:** My 10th grader has always gotten his own way. When he was younger, he pitched tantrums and I gave in. Now he's totally rebellious. He calls me names and refuses to do what I ask. His teachers are as frustrated as I am. What can I do now to help him get his behavior under control?

**A:** All teens go through periods of rebelling against authority. But your son has moved beyond what's acceptable—at home and at school. It's not too late to turn things around. Here's how:

- **Set up basic expectations.** Focus on things such as speaking respectfully to others.
- **Discuss consequences.** Tell your teen he'll face consequences for misbehavior. These should be roughly proportional to his actions. (Taking the car without permission isn't the same as calling someone a name.)
- **Enforce consequences** when your teen tests the limits. This may be tough, but stay calm and remember that he needs a parent, not a friend.
- **Meet with your teen's teachers.** You and the teachers need to agree on tactics and present a united front.
- **Seek support** for your teen and yourself. A friendly boss, a Big Brother, a mentor or a coach may help you both navigate this road.



## Are you helping your shy teen feel more confident?

Nearly everyone has felt shy at one time or another. But some teens are shy in any new situation. That makes it harder for them to make friends and participate at school. Are you helping your shy teen cope? Answer *yes* or *no*:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you take** time to show your teen that you love her?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you help** your teen role-play challenging situations?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to try activities she might enjoy, such as solo sports?
- \_\_\_ **4. Are you helping** your teen find volunteer opportunities? Helping others makes teens feel good about themselves.
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you work** with your teen's teachers to find solutions if her shyness causes problems at school?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your teen gain confidence and social skills. For each no, try that idea.*

*"If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything."  
—Mark Twain*

## Smooth the road to college

Managing his college applications is your teen's responsibility, but there are ways you can help. Your senior should be:

- **Finalizing** his list of colleges. Encourage your teen to work with the counselor to choose a range of schools.
- **Writing** and editing college essays. Help him schedule time to do his best work.
- **Applying** for financial aid. Learn more about the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at [fafsa.ed.gov](http://fafsa.ed.gov).
- **Asking** teachers for recommendations. Have him prepare a short résumé of his activities to make the job easier.

Source: *College & Career Readiness: What Parents and Students Need to Know and Do Now*, The Parent Institute.

## Proofreading makes perfect

Remind your teen that no matter how much time she spends researching and writing a paper, her work isn't finished until she's proofread it.



Encourage her to proofread slowly. Our eyes tend to fill in missing letters or words. She should also read her paper aloud—her ears may catch what her eyes skip over.

## Concentrate on honesty

Surveys of high school students have found that the majority lied to their parents and teachers. But your teen doesn't have to follow the pack! To promote honesty:

- **Expect it.** Say, "In this family, we think it's important to tell the truth."
- **Make it easy.** Your teen needs to feel comfortable telling you the truth. Say things like, "I'm disappointed in your behavior, but I appreciate your honesty."
- **Live it.** Kids develop their habits from watching their parents.

Source: "The Ethics of American Youth: 2012," Character Counts! [niswc.com/honesty](http://niswc.com/honesty).

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