

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



April 2014

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Help your teen use time wisely when preparing for final exams

As final exams draw near, April is the perfect month to help your teen schedule his time to study effectively. Here's a plan he can follow to make the most of the days leading up to the tests:

1. Ten days before each exam:

- **Get** the details. Will the test be essay or multiple choice? Will the teacher provide copies of previous finals?
- **Write** exam schedule on a calendar.

2. A week before each exam:

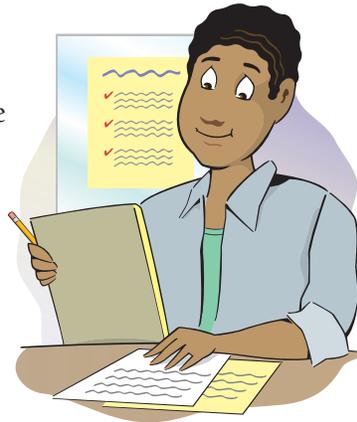
- **Read** through notes for each class.
- **Create** master lists of key words and ideas to be covered. Allow several hours per class to create these lists.

3. Three days before each exam:

- **Review** the master lists. Write sample questions that might be on the test and answer them.
- **Think** about potential essay questions. Outline answers to them.
- **Create** flash cards and memorize facts, dates and concepts.

4. The night before each exam:

- **Do** a final read-through of the lists of key ideas and vocabulary.
- **Get** to bed at a reasonable hour.



Source: C.C. Muchnick, *The Everything Guide to Study Skills*, Adams Media Publishers.



Rebound from a college rejection

College decision letters are filling mailboxes this month. But what do you do if your teen isn't accepted at her top choice?

Remember that a rejection doesn't mean she is a bad student or you are a bad parent. Help your teen take these steps:

1. Accept that rejection hurts.

It's understandable that she's hurting. But remind her that lots of schools must turn away qualified applicants simply because they don't have enough space.

2. Realize it's not the end.

What did your teen hope to

pursue at this particular school? Chances are good that other schools have similar programs.

- ### 3. Change direction.
- Is she waiting to hear from other colleges? Could she attend a community college and reapply to her dream school next year? Work together to create an alternate plan for her future—and then follow it.

Source: F.D. Barth, LCSW, "College Rejection Letters Are Coming—How to Cope When They Arrive," *Psychology Today*, <http://tinyurl.com/2g2e2gc>.

Make time for your teen

Research shows that teens who spend time with their parents are more likely to do well in school. So plan some time together each week. Try:



- **Cooking.** You both have to eat!
- **Exercising.** Your teen is more likely to talk when you're not face-to-face.
- **Starting a shared hobby.** You may bond over a mutual interest.

Effective school habits also build a great work ethic

In today's competitive workplace, specific job skills aren't enough. When competing for a job, your teen will also need a strong work ethic—dependability, initiative and interpersonal skills. She can strengthen those important parts of her work ethic every day in school by:

- **Showing up for classes on time.**
- **Working without being nagged.**
- **Participating in group projects.**

Source: M. Hawkins, "Work Ethic Training Helps Teens Gain Employability Skills," *IMPACT: University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System*, <http://tinyurl.com/nfzbe7c>.

Combat writer's block with a photo journal

Writing with ease takes practice. Inspire your teen to

write by challenging him to make a photo journal. Tell him to take pictures of one of his interests or skills. Print them one to a page, then let them jumpstart his writing. He can:

- **Narrate the action** in the photos.
- **Write a poem** about each picture.
- **Detail the instructions** that go with the photos to demonstrate his skill.



Source: R. Shankar-Brown, "Actively Engaging Middle Level Students with Photo Journals," *Middle School Journal*, November 2011.



My teen has intimate pictures on her phone—what do I do?

Q: My daughter's phone was on the table and I looked at it. I found that she and her boyfriend have been exchanging shocking, explicit pictures of each other. When I confronted her, she said everyone does it. Now she won't trust me because I looked at her phone and I don't trust that she will stop sending photos. What should I do?

A: What your daughter is doing is called "sexting," and it is important for you to exert your authority as her parent. Stress that everyone is *not* doing it and take a stand against it. Emphasize to her that:



- **Nothing online ever really goes away.** What happens when the two of them break up? Will he send those pictures to someone else?
- **These photos could have a devastating effect** on her academic success in high school, and later on her college and job applications, if others see them.
- **Sexing can lead to bullying and harrassment** incidents in school.
- **Laws against child abuse and pornography** may mean it is possible for teens to be criminally charged for sending explicit photos.

Your daughter is going to have to work to regain *your* trust. Tell her you will check her phone and contact your cell carrier to see records of her calls and texts. Explain to her that you must both do everything you can to keep her safe and protect her privacy.



Can you communicate too much?

Open communication between parents and teens is a good thing. Usually. Still, some topics may cause a high school student to worry, or lose the respect you have taught him to have for you, his teachers and other adults.

Are you over-sharing adult information with your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question:

- ___ **1. Do you ask** your teen's advice about dating?
- ___ **2. Do you tell** your teen about problems with your ex-spouse?
- ___ **3. Do you share** detailed reasons with your teen why you don't like your boss?
- ___ **4. Do you admit**, if your teen doesn't like one of his teachers, that you agree with him?

___ **5. Do you confide** your low opinion of your neighbor to your teen?

The answer to each of these questions should be no. Teens shouldn't be their parents confidants. If you need to discuss these issues, share them with an adult friend or family member.

*"If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door."
—Milton Berle*

Make screen time positive

Your teen's time online will be well spent if she explores one of these learning websites:

- **American Memory** (<http://memory.loc.gov>). A project of the Library of Congress, this site includes texts, recordings, maps and photographs.
- **Math Open Reference** (www.mathopenref.com) has explanations of geometry, trigonometry and calculus concepts and problem-solving how-tos.
- **Chemical elements** (www.chemical-elements.com) features an interactive periodic table.
- **Khan Academy** (www.khanacademy.org) has more than 2700 videos on a wide range of academic subjects.

Find a volunteer job that fits

Teens who volunteer have stronger problem-solving and leadership skills. Here are some job ideas to match your child's interests:

- **Reading:** Read at a nursing home.
- **Writing:** Write to troops overseas.
- **Being active:** Run a race for a charity.
- **Talking to friends:** Peer counseling.

Teach good money habits

April is National Financial Literacy Month. Your teen will learn to manage money if she:



- **Sets a goal for savings.** For example, to save \$600 a year, she should plan to save \$50 a month.
- **Cuts back.** Giving up \$2 of snacks a week saves \$104 a year.
- **Thinks before buying.** Lists help.
- **Writes down** where her money goes.

Source: "Start Smart: Money Management for Teens: How to Save, Spend and Protect Your Cash," Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, <http://tinyurl.com/8729x4c>.

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