

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



April 2015

Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

## Can your teen handle a part-time job and still put schoolwork first?

After-school jobs can teach teens responsibility and money management skills, provide opportunities to prepare for future careers and even enhance college applications. But before you give your teen the go-ahead to apply for jobs, be clear that school is his number one priority.

To help you and your teen decide if an after-school job is right for him:

- **Find out the time commitment.** Mowing the neighbor's lawn does not require the same amount of time as working at a local restaurant. Will he be able to plan on regular shifts?
- **Consider what he's already doing.** How much time does he need for homework every night? Does he play any sports or participate in other after-school activities? An after-school job can help your teen learn valuable time management skills—but only if it's not overloading his schedule.
- **Factor in your teen's need for downtime.** Between school, friends and other commitments, teens have a lot on their plates. For many, juggling these demands can be stressful. Will adding an after-school job to his schedule leave your teen any time for himself?

Make sure that your teen will be able to handle an after-school job before he begins to look for one. While jobs build important life skills, like self-confidence and reliability, keep in mind that your teen's full-time job is being a successful student.

Source: "Students and Part-Time Work," CollegeBoard, [niswc.com/rightjob](http://niswc.com/rightjob).



## Don't ignore dropout risks

High school dropouts face a bleak economic future. Knowing the dropout risk factors can help parents respond to them. Teens drop out for many reasons, including:

- **Poor reading skills.** If your teen has trouble reading, talk with the school about how to help. Encourage him to read outside of school, too.
- **Getting "lost" in ninth grade.** Pay attention to your freshman's attendance and grades. Take action if they slide.
- **Lack of connection to the school.** Encourage your teen to get involved in a club or sport.

Source: "Why Students Drop Out," National Dropout Prevention Center, [niswc.com/dropoutstats](http://niswc.com/dropoutstats).

## Your teen, the tech teacher

You may know how to access a YouTube video, but chances are, your teen is more technologically savvy. So swap roles—have *her* teach *you* some tech tricks.



Your teen will get a chance to be an expert, and if she isn't sure of the details of an app or program, she'll have to learn them to teach it to you. You'll get to interact with your teen in a positive new way.

## Your teen needs your time

Research shows that teens who spend time with their parents do better in school. You don't have to do anything fancy. Try to:



- **Spend time** with your teen's friends. He will want to hang out with them anyway. Meet their parents and stress that school is a priority for your family.
- **Eat together**, at least one meal a day.
- **Give your teen a choice** of things to do with you. If he would rather take a walk than go grocery shopping, do it!

## Study tips make complex tasks simpler

Your teen is maturing rapidly, but her brain is still developing. She's still learning to think critically, plan ahead, solve problems and control impulses. To help her practice these skills as she learns and processes more complicated, abstract information, have her try these tips:

- **Color-code for organization.** For example, your teen might write assignments in blue, new information in red and long-term project details in green. The colors will help her know what to do with the material.
- **Use graphic organizers** to visualize new information. Time lines and diagrams may help her recall facts and find answers.
- **Create process charts** to outline the steps of long-term projects. They'll help her keep track of what needs to be done when.
- **Rely on routines.** Help her develop processes for doing homework, studying for tests, solving word problems and more.

Source: P. Lorain, "Brain Development in Young Adolescents," National Education Association, [niswc.com/brainstips](http://niswc.com/brainstips).

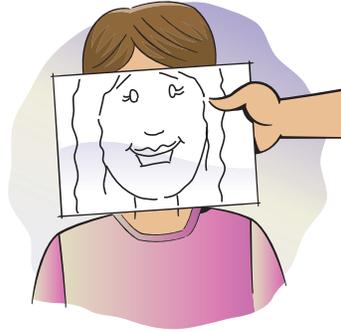


## How do I replace my teen's rude attitude with respect?

**Q:** My daughter has started behaving in a way that is totally disrespectful. If I tell her to do something, she rolls her eyes and ignores me. If I try to start a conversation, she sighs and ignores me. I suspect that she is also acting this way at school. How can I make my teen respect adults?

**A:** In the short run, you probably can't. However, you *can* require her to behave as though she respects you and her teachers. The longer she does it, the more likely she will be to feel respect. Here's how:

- **Establish clear rules for behavior.** Let your daughter know that while it is acceptable for her to disagree with you, it is unacceptable for her to behave disrespectfully. Then define exactly what you mean: rolling her eyes, using a rude tone of voice, raising her voice.
- **Agree on the consequences for disrespect.** Tell your teen you are prepared to confront her about this behavior every time you see it. Discuss what will happen when you do. Tell her you will not give her a warning—that this discussion is her warning.
- **Follow through.** When your teen rolls her eyes, stay calm and enforce the consequence. It will be tough the first few times, but eventually she'll learn to control her response to you. You and her teachers should see more respectful behavior.



## What will your teen do this summer?

Summer is just around the corner. If you want your teen to be engaged in productive activities, it's time to start planning. Are you helping your teen prepare for a rewarding summer? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Have you checked** with your teen's teachers to be sure he is passing his courses? If he isn't, he may need to take a make-up class.
- \_\_\_ **2. Have you explored** options for summer classes that allow your teen to pursue an interest or fulfill a requirement?
- \_\_\_ **3. Has your teen begun** a job search if he wants to work?
- \_\_\_ **4. Have you and your teen** thought about places where he can make a difference if he wants to volunteer?

- \_\_\_ **5. Are you helping** your teen brainstorm ways to earn money if jobs are hard to come by?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are setting your teen up for a constructive summer break. For each no, try that idea.*

“Long before I was a success, my parents made me feel I could be one.”  
—Toni Morrison

## Make responsibility routine

When your teen assumes ownership of tasks at home, it teaches her the kind of responsibility she can also apply to her schoolwork. To make it work:

- **Involve your teen.** Get her input on what she is able to handle. Ask for her opinion on family matters.
- **Define tasks clearly.** Write them down. Make sure your teen understands what a “finished” chore looks like.
- **Provide positive feedback.** Praise her efforts when she completes a task.
- **Be consistent.** If a chore needs to be done every week, don't let your teen slide.

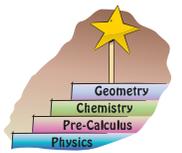
Source: “Help My Teenager Take On More Responsibility,” EduGuide, [niswc.com/teentasks](http://niswc.com/teentasks).

## Praise efforts big and small

It's true that “If it's worth learning, it's worth celebrating.” When you celebrate your teen's successes, even the small ones, you promote positive associations with learning. Give him a pat on the back for the effort he put into completing a tough project, as well as for his A in chemistry.

## Add time for math, science

Taking advantage of as many science and math classes as possible in high school gives your teen a wider variety of college and career options. Share these math and science success tips with your teen:



- **Give it time.** If a class is difficult, take time to study every day.
- **Start each study session** by reviewing.
- **Answer the sample questions** at the end of the chapter.
- **Don't fall behind.** Studying science or math is like climbing stairs. Progress is made step by step.

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