

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

Study groups can help teens gain knowledge and collaboration skills

As year-end exams approach, your teen may want to consider studying with friends. Studying in a group can benefit teens by allowing them to share their strengths and bolster their weaknesses. It's also great practice for adulthood, when they will need to collaborate with others on work projects.



The key is to form a group in which the members *really* study. Share these steps with your teen for setting one up:

- 1. Keep the group small.** Four to six members usually works best.
- 2. Choose members carefully.** They should want to do well in school and be serious about studying. If your teen loves to socialize, it may be better if group members are not his best buddies. Similarly, if he is involved in a relationship with someone, it may not be a good idea to include that person in the study group either.
- 3. Divide the work.** In most study groups, each member focuses on one section of the overall subject. It is helpful if members work on sections that play to their strengths. Then members explain their sections to the rest of the group.
- 4. Keep it professional.** Designate a set meeting time and place and stick to the schedule. Appoint a leader (rotate this position) to keep the studying on track.

Source: R. Fry, *How to Study*, Cengage Learning.



Encourage efforts at self-reliance

Your teen is growing up fast. Learning self-reliance now will make her more responsible as she finishes her high school years. It will also help when she heads off to college or the workforce. To teach this lesson, don't do things for your teen that you know she can do for herself. Also:

- **Emphasize choices** and results. Before she acts, encourage your teen to think about what could happen as a result of her choices.
- **Don't solve small problems.** She knew she wanted to see the new movie next week. But she spent every cent she had on blue hair color. She won't learn to rely on herself if you buy the ticket.
- **Don't rescue her** unless it's a matter of safety. Forgotten books and homework aren't safety issues.
- **Don't redo her work.** Her paper may not be as organized as you think it should be, but resist offering to "fix" it for her.
- **Applaud your teen** when she makes a good decision. When she doesn't, ask what she learned.

Share tips for stress relief

Life can be stressful for high school students. To help your teen cope, suggest that she:



- **Keep a journal.** Writing about a problem may help her see it in a new light.
- **Get regular exercise.**
- **Help others.** Your teen may realize her own problems aren't so big.

'I don't care,' sometimes means 'I need help'

If your teen's answer to why he hasn't been turning in homework for a class is "I didn't feel like doing it," laziness may not be the issue. Your teen's "I don't care" attitude may be hiding the fact that he needs serious help in that class.

Contact the teacher and talk about your teen's work. If he's struggling, perhaps he can stay after class for extra help. The teacher may be able to suggest a tutor or an online tutorial. Understanding the issue is the first step toward fixing it.

Preparation is the key to successful oral reports

Public speaking is a valuable skill in school and in the workplace. But it's challenging for many students. Preparation is critical.



When your teen is assigned an oral report, have her:

- **Research the topic.** When deciding whether to include a fact, she should consider its interest value. If she wants to know about it, others probably will, too.
- **Start with a "hook."** A startling fact or interesting story in her introduction will engage listeners. She should follow it with three or four key points.
- **Practice.** She can record herself or ask family for feedback. Did she speak clearly?



How do I help my teen cope with shyness?

Q: My daughter has always been shy. I thought she'd grow out of it but, if anything, it's getting worse. She's a good student and a great artist. But put her with a group of teens and she just freezes up. What can I do?

A: Your daughter is not alone. Two out of every five people she meets are probably shy, too. But it's important that you help your teen build her social skills, so she'll be able to take an active role in her education and get along in the world.



Accepting a teen's shyness is key for parents. Focus on the positives. Your teen is probably a great listener. She may have good insights into people. Emphasize those strengths.

To help her manage her shyness:

- **Have her practice looking people in the eye** and smiling when she meets them.
- **Help her prepare a question or two** to ask when she meets someone new. "What do you think of [something going on at school]?"
- **Find ways for her to work with other kids** in small groups. Is there an art club she can join? Could she paint sets for the school play?

As she works with her strengths, she'll gain confidence. She may never be the center of attention. But she'll be a confident, competent young woman.

Source: B.J. Carducci, Ph.D. and L. Kaiser, *Shyness: The Ultimate Teen Guide*, Rowman & Littlefield.



Are you preparing your teen for life?

Life after graduation is an exciting prospect for teens, but it also poses many big questions. What do they want to be? What about college? What should they study? Are you helping your teen find answers? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Have you encouraged** your teen to use the career-planning services at school?
- ___ **2. Have you talked** with your teen about careers that interest him and the training or education they require?
- ___ **3. Have you suggested** that he talk to or shadow a person in a job that interests him?
- ___ **4. Are you and your teen** planning for the summer? Can he take a community college class or get a summer job related to a potential career?
- ___ **5. Have you helped** your teen prepare a résumé?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen focus on preparing for the future. For each no, try that idea.

"We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future."

—Franklin D. Roosevelt

Foster learning at home

You don't have to be an expert in all the subjects your teen is learning to support his success in high school. What's important is that you encourage and enable learning. Here's how:

- **Give your teen opportunities** to research and learn more. For example, ask him to help you compare brands of an item your family wants to purchase.
- **Ask your teen to explain** new concepts he learns at school to you.
- **Support his talents.** They may be the foundation of his future career.

Source: M. Levine, M.D., *Ready or Not, Here Life Comes*, Simon & Schuster.

Boring? Not this reading

Be ready when your teen complains that reading is boring. Suggest that she:

- **Read about one of her passions.**
- **Read something funny**, like a joke book.
- **Read something with a twist**, like a mystery.

Source: "Children Who Can Read, But Don't ...," Reading is Fundamental, nswc.com/funreads.

Use driving to teach respect

Most teens dream about getting a driver's license. That makes driving an ideal example to use when teaching your teen about respect.



Point out drivers who are courteous and respectful. And if a driver cuts you off in traffic, talk about it with your teen. Ask, "Is that driver showing respect for other drivers? How would you respond?"

If your teen says he would respond in the same manner, remind him that if he did, he could put himself and others in danger. Help him see that no response is sometimes the best response to disrespect.

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