

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



December 2010

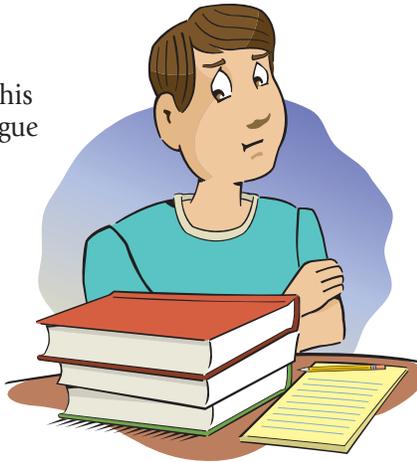
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Educational Service Unit 10

Prepare for the 'terrible teens'

Sometimes parents feel their teens are going through the "terrible twos" again. Teens throw temper tantrums, talk back and disregard family and school rules. If your teen is a challenge, remember you are the adult and you are in charge!

To get your teen back on track:

- **Establish a set time** for him to do his homework. Then you won't have to argue with him about it every day.
- **Establish a set time** for him to go to bed and get up. Establishing routines is one way to eliminate nagging and get behavior under control.
- **Make sure he is ready for school** before he goes to bed. That will eliminate hassles in the morning.
- **Monitor his homework.** Ask him to show you completed work and tell you about what he has learned.
- **Expect him to do chores** on a regular basis. You may even want to post a checklist where he can check off assigned tasks he has completed.
- **Talk with his teachers.** Ask what they have observed in the classroom. Ask how you can work as a team to promote mature behavior.



Remember, even though you must be firm, fair and consistent, your teen still needs your love and affection. Don't forget to say "I love you" every day.

Help your teen with memorization skills

There's much more to learning than memorization. But your teen will be a more efficient student if she has strong memory skills. To build her memory skills, your teen should:

- **Put facts on flash cards** and review frequently. It's better to study small amounts over time than to cram all in one night.
- **Focus hardest** on the middle part of reading material. Research shows that memory works best at the beginning and at the end, so put extra effort into the middle.
- **Make up a rhyme** or song. Rhymed facts are easy to recall. And with a song, the sequence of notes can help teens remember the word that comes next.
- **Study, and then rest** or sleep. The brain is never asleep. While the body relaxes, the brain can still sort and retain material.
- **Look at the big picture.** Consider how reading material relates to other things. This makes it easier to remember.

Source: Eric Jensen, *Student Success Secrets*, ISBN: 0-8120-9488-3, Barron's Educational Series.

Winter attendance counts!

During December an extra shopping trip or a head start on a family vacation may be tempting, but your teen will pay the price. Learning builds day by day. Research shows that regular attendance is key to school success. Make sure your teen is in class, on time, every day.

Study groups can work

Since teens are social animals, suggest that your teen start a study group. To keep the focus on schoolwork, the group should:

- **Keep** the numbers small—no more than six.
- **Divide** the work. Each teen teaches one part of the material to the others.
- **Stick** to an agenda. Have a timekeeper to keep everyone on track.
- **Ask** "why" questions. The benefit of a group is that everyone can share ideas.



Source: Cynthia Johnson, *Caffeine Will Not Help You Pass That Test*, ISBN: 9780-7432-7966-6, Kaplan Books.

Be patient when waiting for teachers' responses

Email offers an opportunity for instant communication. But remember, teachers are in the classroom during the day. After school they sponsor student activities, attend faculty meetings and attend to required paperwork. Realize you may not get a reply in 10 minutes—but you will hear from your teen's teacher eventually. Parent-teacher communication is essential for student success.





How can parents get teens to talk more frequently?

Q: My daughter texts her friends all the time. But I can't get her to talk with me at all. I'd like to be close to my child. What can I do?

A: The short answer to your question is, "Wait a few years." Drawing away from parents is normal during the teen years. Your daughter is trying to figure out who she is. To do that, she needs to put some distance between the two of you.

However, you still have a right and a responsibility to know what's going on in her life. Here are some ways to stay connected:

- **Establish rules.** If she wants to go out with friends, she needs to tell you who she'll be with and where they are going.
- **Monitor her safety.** Explain that you don't need to know every detail of her life, but you do need to know enough to keep her safe.
- **Try some side-by-side chores** such as cooking or painting a room. Chat while you work together.
- **Talk about school.** Read the school newspaper. Check out the school website. Attend events.

In a few years, she'll be standing on her own two feet. That's when she's likely to call and say, "Can we talk?"



Are you encouraging self-reliance?

One of the toughest jobs facing parents of teens is helping their sons and daughters learn how to stand on their own. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're teaching your teen to be self-reliant:

1. **Do you try** to involve your teen in creating the rules?
2. **Have you taught** your teen basic life skills (like doing laundry)? Do you let him practice them?
3. **Do you demonstrate**—and teach—time management?
4. **Have you encouraged** your teen to take a speech course to build confidence and self-assurance?
5. **Have you tried** to teach your teen how to make good decisions?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are moving your teen toward becoming a self-reliant adult. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"A man travels the world over in search of what he needs and returns home to find it."
—George Moore

Honor teens' achievements

To celebrate good grades, making the cast of the musical, passing a driver's exam or other successes:

- **Decorate the dinner table** with related items. Include a few photos.
- **Write your teen a letter.** Say how proud you are. Share your hopes for his future. He may read and reread your supportive words—and he may keep the letter forever.

Source: Mimi Doe, *Nurturing Your Teenager's Soul*, ISBN: 0-39953-028-2, Penguin Group.

Manners show respect

Talking about "good manners" almost seems old-fashioned. But that may be because fewer people practice them, not because they are actually outdated.

Emphasize that your teen's manners speak for her. They send a message that she is a respectful person. Good manners include:

- **Waiting** your turn to speak.
- **Using** proper language when you speak. Proper language includes polite words like *please* and *thank you*. It does not include insults or curse words.
- **Thanking** people who do something nice for you.

Don't break from reading

The winter break is coming up. Your teen may enjoy time away from school, but make sure he keeps reading. If you're taking a trip over the break, have him pack some books to read. And remember, books make great gifts!



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