

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



February 2011

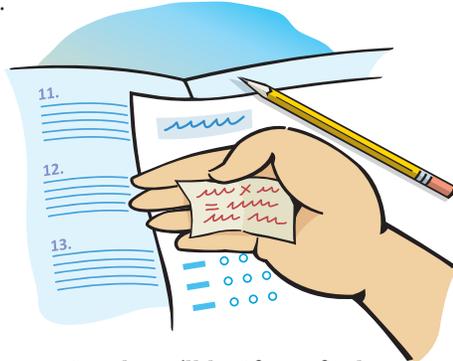
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Educational Service Unit 10

## Caution your teen about cheating

Teens today want to do it all—get great grades, shine in extracurricular activities and have fun with friends. But startling research shows that many of them ease the pressure by cheating.

Since “everyone is doing it,” some teens don’t consider cheating to be dishonest. They need to hear from parents that cheating is the same as lying or stealing. And they need to hear that when they take the cheating shortcut, they’re cheating themselves, too. To keep your teen from cheating:



- **Talk about it.** Explain that cheating is wrong. Tell him how disappointed you’ll be if you find he has cheated.
- **Back off the pressure.** Say you would rather he do his best and earn a lower grade than cheat to get an A.
- **Establish routines.** Good grades are the result of hard work. Expect your teen to have a regular homework time every day. If he says he doesn’t have homework, he can read or review for upcoming tests.
- **Monitor his schedule.** Schoolwork should come first. If he’s too overloaded, help him decide where to cut back.
- **Review school rules.** Your teen will face serious consequences if he is caught cheating.
- **Get help.** If your teen cheats because he finds the material too difficult, have him ask his teachers for help.

Source: R. Nauert Ph.D., “Is Cheating Normal?” PsychCentral, <http://psychcentral.com/news/2010/05/17/is-cheating-in-high-school-normal/13876.html>.



## Discouraged teens are at risk of dropout

Demanding subjects push some high schoolers to the limit. Without your encouragement, your teen might give up—or drop out. To support your teen:

- **Ask your teen** to do a sample problem for you. Just reviewing the textbook may get her started.
- **Suggest a study buddy.** Having a partner can reduce the stress.
- **Check for homework help.** Many teachers offer online resources for students.
- **Inform the teacher.** If your teen has done her best and still struggles, let her teacher know. It may be time for a tutor or remedial instruction.
- **Remind your teen** of her past successes. She struggled to memorize the state capitals; she agonized over fractions. But eventually she got them!

## Supply your teen with skills for future success

What do teens need most to make it in today’s world? Experts say they need:

- **Communication skills.** Teens need to express themselves calmly and effectively.
- **Social skills.** Teens need to know how to behave in a variety of situations.
- **Self-respect.** Teens need to know their strong points and weak points. They must learn to highlight their strengths.
- **Goals.** Teens should have some idea of where they want to go and what they want to be.

## Valentines are still effective

February is the month of love. Remember the valentines you bought or made for elementary school exchanges? You can:

- **Tape one** to your teen’s mirror.
- **Tuck one** under her pillow.
- **Stick one** in the pocket of her coat.



Use extra valentines to share messages of love throughout the year.

## Better sleep = better grades

Tired teens can’t concentrate in class. To ensure your teen gets the sleep he needs:

- **Calm** down the bedroom. Keep the computer, TV and cell phone out of your teen’s bedroom.
- **Insist** on a regular schedule, getting up at the same time on weekends.
- **Encourage** “power naps.”



Source: “Sleep Awareness Week Highlights Teens’ Sleep Needs,” New York Presbyterian Hospital, [www.nyp.org/news/health/060329.html](http://www.nyp.org/news/health/060329.html).



## How can parents handle rebellious teens?

**Q:** My daughter is very rebellious. She talks back. She won't do homework or chores. She doesn't appreciate the sacrifices we are making so that she can study and pursue a career. What can we do?

**A:** Teenagers often test the limits their parents set. But remember, you are the adult and you are in charge. Don't allow your daughter to treat you with disrespect. Here are some things you can do:



- **Establish clearly-stated rules** about:
  - *Homework.* Expect her to complete her homework before watching TV or going out with friends.
  - *Chores.* Have a regular routine to avoid daily arguments.
  - *Her tone of voice* and language when she is speaking with you.
- **Impose consequences** when she breaks your rules:
  - *No TV or cell phone privileges.*
  - *No time away from home* with friends.
- **Talk with your daughter's guidance counselor.** If you cannot go to the school, ask if you can speak by phone.

Your daughter needs your love and affection. But she also needs you to be firm, fair and consistent. Don't let it get you down when she contradicts you. This is a sign that she needs your help. Let her know that although you are not pleased with her *behavior*, you still love *her*.



## Does your teen manage money wisely?

Nearly one in four college students graduates with more than \$5,000 in credit card debt. High school is not too early to help teens learn how to manage their money. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen manage money wisely:

1. **Do you give** your teen practice in managing money, such as by expecting him to pay for clothing and school supplies out of his allowance?
2. **Do you expect** your teen to save for college or his future?
3. **Do you help** your teen set short-term savings goals, too? If he wants a new MP3 player, he has to save for it instead of using a credit card.
4. **Do you let** your teen know he can't have *everything* he wants?
5. **Have you helped** your teen open a bank account?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer means you're helping your teen learn the basics of money management. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“The safe way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket.”

—Frank Hubbard

## Promote scientific thinking

Scientists share a few common qualities. To help your teen think like a scientist, foster:

- **Curiosity.** Ask him questions like, “How do you think they built that?”
- **Flexibility.** “What are some other ways that could work?”
- **Orderly thinking.** “Can you explain it to me, step by step?”
- **Determination.** Scientists often fail hundreds of times for every one success. Compliment your teen every time he sticks to something.

Source: Michael H. Popkin & others, *Helping Your Child Succeed in School*, ISBN: 1-880283-15-8, Active Parenting Publishers.

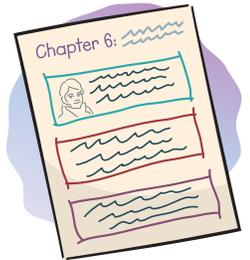
## Procrastination can end!

When the due date is in the future, it's easy for teens to put some tasks on the back burner. But a big project or book report has to get done eventually. Try having a “don't put it off any longer” day once a week. You might be motivated to finish projects, too!

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, ISBN: 0-684-85609-3, Simon & Schuster.

## Boxes boost memory skills

She read the chapter—but she can't tell you what she learned. Next time, have her write the title at the top of a sheet of paper. Then have her draw a box for each section of the chapter, writing that section's name at the top of the corresponding box.



In each box, have her write a few words or draw a picture that will help her remember the main ideas and events from that section. A quick glance at her boxes will help her remember all of the most important parts of the chapter!

### Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Writer: Pat Hodgdon. Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-103x