

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Educational Service Unit 10

Prepare your teen to take charge of homework responsibility

To prepare for college and careers, high school students must learn to manage their workload independently. It's a skill that takes practice. Make it your teen's responsibility to complete and hand in his homework on time. To set him up for success, follow these steps:



1. Establish a homework schedule.

Together, decide on a time for your teen to do his work that will let him finish and still get to bed on time. He should begin each homework session by reviewing his assignments.

2. Keep homework time free of other activities. Make sure that basketball practice and violin lessons don't conflict with scheduled study time.

3. Help your teen develop a system for tracking his homework.

He can write his assignments in a planner and use a checklist to mark off each task as he completes it.

4. Remind your teen only once that he has homework. Part of taking responsibility for his own work is remembering what he has to do.

5. Support your teen's efforts. Assure him that he can do the work. And make sure he knows where to look for help if he needs it.

6. Leave your teen alone! Let him prove to you that he can be responsible for completing his work and handing it in on time.

Source: P. Porter, "Seven Steps to Help Your Child Take Responsibility for His Learning," Ezine Articles, niscw.com/manage-homework.



What works to motivate teens?

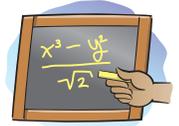
Not all techniques parents use to motivate their teens have the desired effect. Some have just the opposite! Keep these dos and don'ts in mind:

- **DO work with your teen** to find solutions. She'll be more motivated to follow through on a plan she helped create.
- **DO make yourself available** to talk over your teen's problems, without taking responsibility for solving them.
- **DO link your teen's goals** to the task at hand. Getting practice writing papers now will make writing them in college easier.
- **DON'T nag.** It doesn't work, and it will annoy your teen.
- **DON'T always bail your teen** out. She has to learn to face the consequences of her actions—or inactions.
- **DON'T lose your temper.** It won't motivate your teen. It will just create distance between the two of you.

Source: J. Nelsen and L. Lott, "How Do You Motivate a Teen?" Positive Discipline, niscw.com/motivation.

School is about learning

Make sure your teen knows that you care more about learning than about grades. Ask questions that test his understanding. Instead of asking how he thinks he'll do on the math test, for example, ask him to explain how to do a problem. You'll show him you find learning exciting and worthwhile.



Encourage 'joyreading'

To help your teen see reading more as a pleasure than a chore, have her:

- **Make it social.** Your teen could start a book club or read and comment on book review websites and blogs.
- **Enjoy the "Rights of the Reader."** These, according to author Daniel Pennac, include the right to read anything, to skip pages, to reread sections and to put down a book without finishing it.
- **Check out book lists.** Try www.teenreads.com.
- **Read with you.** Read the same book and discuss it.



Source: M. Patroulis, "Motivating Teen Readers," ReadWriteThink, niscw.com/joyread.

Take the stress out of tests

The better prepared your teen is for a test, the less anxiety he'll feel. Your teen should:

- **Take notes in class.** He will have a solid base from which to study.
- **Go to review sessions.** He can ask the teacher questions about the test format and topics that will be covered.
- **Write important facts,** formulas or dates on a piece of paper, and review them before going to sleep and before the test.
- **Get a good night's sleep** and eat breakfast before the test.

Source: "Test Preparation Tips," niscw.com/testprep.



How do I help my teen with ADHD focus on homework?

Q: My 15-year-old daughter has ADHD. Getting organized and doing homework is even more difficult for her than for most teens. I am exhausted from fighting nightly homework battles. What can I do to help her figure this out?

A: Getting a teen to focus on homework can be a challenge. And as you know, attention issues make it even harder. Still, there is a method to help her build the structure that will make it easier for her. It starts with creating routines. To begin:



- **Create a routine “quiet hour”** in your home every night. Turn off the TV and the phones. Make this the time that all family members do quiet work. The idea is to create a calm, distraction-free time for your teen to work on homework. You may also want to try making this computer-free time, unless she is doing work online for school.
- **Help your teen set some goals.** Review her assignments together. Be sure she knows what she needs to do. Then have her write a list of what she’s going to accomplish by the end of the study session.
- **Plan breaks in advance.** High school students should be able to work for 45–50 minutes before needing a break. Start with 20 and work up.
- **Make sure she puts her work in her backpack.** That makes it much more likely that today’s homework will get handed in tomorrow.



Should my teen be multitasking?

Teens love to text while listening to music and doing math. But does multitasking make them more efficient? Research says probably not. Are you helping your teen concentrate on one thing at a time? Answer *yes* or *no*:

- ___ **1. Do you maintain** a “tech curfew”? After a certain hour, electronics are turned off.
- ___ **2. Do you encourage** your teen to read? It strengthens the brain’s ability to focus.
- ___ **3. Do you turn off** the TV during study time?
- ___ **4. Do you check** sometimes to see how many different things your child is doing while he’s “studying”?
- ___ **5. Do you set an example** by working on one thing at a time wherever possible?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are teaching your teen to avoid the distractions that come with multitasking. For each no, try that idea.

“I am learning all the time. The tombstone will be my diploma.”

—Eartha Kitt

See it, hear it, feel it

Students differ in the ways they like to learn. Some prefer to read, others to listen to a lecture. Some prefer to learn by doing. Your teen may be more motivated to study if you offer tips that suit her current preferences:

- **Readers** can use color to highlight facts, post key notes at eye level and focus on pictures and charts in books.
- **Listeners** can read aloud and discuss material with others.
- **Hands-on learners** can read actively by underlining or attaching sticky notes to the book, and acting out scenes.

Source: R. Dunn, “Rita Dunn Answers Questions on Learning Styles,” *Educational Leadership*, niswc.com/styles.

Stick with it: Build resilience

Parents play a critical role in helping teens develop the resilience they need to overcome challenges. It’s important to:

- **Support your teen.** Tell him you love him and believe he can succeed.
- **Remind him** of his strengths.
- **Help him connect** at school. Look for a club, team or activity he can join.

Source: “Resilience Guide For Parents & Teachers,” American Psychological Association, niswc.com/resilience.

Improve writing skills and memories with scrapbooks

The best way for your teen to improve her writing skills is to write often, about all kinds of things. But sometimes writing is easier when it is personal.



Suggest your teen try keeping a scrapbook. As she adds photos, ticket stubs and other items, have her write a short paragraph describing the events each represents. She’ll get writing practice, and create lasting memories of her experiences.

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