

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



February 2016

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## For school success, let your teen practice personal responsibility

Your high schooler has a lot of responsibilities. He needs to learn in class, complete assignments and practice study skills. He must be responsible for himself, his actions and his interactions with others. The ability to handle all these responsibilities comes with practice. Here are some ways to help your teen develop his sense of responsibility:

- **Have him use a calendar** to manage due dates and commitments. Seeing his assignments and test dates alongside his other activities will help him see when he has time to relax—and when he'll have to devote all his efforts to schoolwork.
- **Put him in charge of scheduling** his own appointments. This prepares him to manage his time responsibly in the future.
- **Help him set a budget** and stick to it. He may have some spending money from an allowance or a part-time job. Budgeting will help him pay attention to where his money goes and see that saving can be more rewarding than buying another shirt.
- **Ask him to plan a family outing**—such as a picnic in the park or a visit to a museum. Have him coordinate with family members, schedule a time and plan how to get there. Then enjoy the trip together.
- **Encourage him to read the news.** Learning about the issues world leaders deal with may help your teen see that his responsibilities aren't such major inconveniences after all.



## Keep tabs on social media

You have a big influence on your teen's life and attitude towards school. But increasingly, so does social media. Make it a point to:

- **Ask your teen** to show you which social media sites she uses.
- **Look together** at some of the things she and her friends post. Talk about whether they reflect your teen's values.

## For reading comprehension, stop and ask

High school requires teens to read and understand a lot of complex material. When your teen reads, have him check his comprehension by asking himself these questions:



- **What are the main ideas?**
- **What details support** these ideas?
- **How do these ideas compare** to things I've learned in the past?
- **Do I understand** the conclusions the author presents?

Source: L.M. Joseph and others, "The Effects of Self-Questioning on Reading Comprehension: A Literature Review," *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, niswc.com/readandask.



## Four strategies help make math add up

Some students have the impression that they "can't do math." But even students who find math challenging can master it with hard work. Assure your teen she can do it, then share these strategies for math success:

1. **Ask questions.** Many teens are hesitant to ask questions in class. Remind your teen that if she has a question, others are probably wondering the same thing.
2. **Study with a partner.** Your teen and her study partner can talk through problem-solving strategies.
3. **Keep up with homework.** Math knowledge builds on what was learned before. Completing
4. **Read ahead.** If tomorrow's class will be on chapter four, your teen should read it tonight and try to solve sample problems. This will help her pinpoint what she doesn't understand, so she can pay extra attention to it in class.

Source: C. Donaldson, "10 Tips for Math Success," Education.com, niswc.com/candomath.

## Languages expand horizons

Learning a foreign language does a lot more for your teen than fulfill a graduation requirement. It can sharpen her skills in her native language, expose her to another culture and even give her a wider choice of careers. To support your teen's efforts:



- **Ask her to teach you** some phrases. Use them around the house.
- **Share articles** about the country whose language she's studying.
- **Show interest** in her language homework and projects.
- **Look for local events** related to the language. Attend one together.



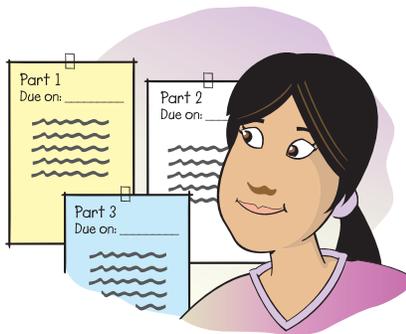
## How do I get my teen to start assignments sooner?

**Q:** My daughter tends to put things off. If she has a big paper due, she waits until the night before—sometimes, until very late the night before. She's bright, but her grades suffer. How can I help her break the procrastination habit?

**A:** Everyone puts off a task at some point. But if your daughter is doing it all the time, you are right to worry.

Procrastination can have serious consequences, and she needs to change her ways before she gets to college or the workplace. To put an end to her habit:

- **Ask your teen why** she puts things off. Is she afraid of failing? Does she like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute? Is she just unmotivated? Together, brainstorm ways to address her reasons, such as checking in early with the teacher to make sure she's on the right track.
- **Help your teen divide** projects into smaller pieces. She should set a deadline for each part. Even if she waits until the last minute to complete a section, bit by bit she'll finish her project. And once she gets started, she'll find it easier to keep working. As she completes each task, she should reward herself; for example, she could play a favorite online game.
- **Help your teen see how** her assignments relate to her long-term goals. Learning how to study and manage time will help her reach her goal of being successful in high school and college.



## Be aware of the behavior patterns of substance abuse

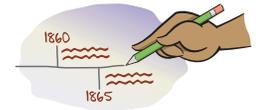
Teens who abuse alcohol or drugs often display particular patterns of behavior. Don't ignore these warning signs:

- **Sudden academic problems.** There can be many reasons for a big drop in grades. But if this happens along with another warning sign, it's a red flag.
- **Trouble with peers.** Teens who feel they have no friends or who start hanging around peers with negative behavior may be at risk.
- **Lack of caring.** This includes leaving once-important things behind, such as concern for appearance, what parents think and what non-using peers do.
- **Unusual money occurrences.** Teens on drugs often take money from their homes. A teen who suddenly has more money than usual may be selling drugs.

Source: "Is Your Teen Using? Signs and Symptoms of Substance Abuse," Drugfree.org, [nswc.com/redflags](http://nswc.com/redflags).

## Time lines let students draw connections

In history classes, cause and effect matters and putting things in order is important. Time lines can make it easier for students to see what the context was for an event. To make one, your teen should:



1. **Set time boundaries.** These might be the dates of the era discussed in his book.
2. **Identify important events.** List their key points: Who, what, where and when?
3. **Use color** to distinguish events. If he's studying the Russian Revolution, he could make the February Revolution orange and the October Revolution red.

Your teen can review for a test by trying to recreate his time line from memory.

Source: L. Zwier and G. Mathes, *Study Skills for Success*, University of Michigan Press.



## Are you teaching your teen your values?

It may not always seem as though your teen is listening to you, but he is. And you play an important role in shaping his values. Are you actively communicating your values to your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

1. **Do you use** everyday opportunities to discuss your values with your teen?
2. **Do you model** the values you want your teen to have himself?
3. **Do you look** for ways to put your values into action—such as by volunteering or helping others in need?
4. **Do you compliment** your teen when you see him practicing your family's values?
5. **Do you point out** people you see on the news or

around town who are putting their values into action?

### How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are instilling values in your teen. For each no, try that idea.

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

—Toni Morrison

### Helping Students Learn®

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

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

Copyright © 2016, The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc.

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

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1527-103x