

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Help teens prepare for test-taking

Whether your teen is facing a test for a chapter covered in his science class or a novel he read in English class, he doesn't want to walk in unprepared. A study schedule will help him get ready so he can do his best. Have your teen get a large calendar. Suggest that he write down when he will study just as he enters times and dates for other appointments and activities. Then, encourage your teen to:

- **Set priorities.** Doing well on tests is important. Teens who excel aren't necessarily naturally smart; they just work hard to achieve their goals.
- **Attend class.** Don't let your teen miss an important discussion, a lab experiment or the final review before an exam.
- **Keep up with homework.** Doing homework every day helps your teen identify what he already understands and where he needs additional help.
- **Review quizzes** his teacher may have given on the content. He should focus especially on the questions that he answered incorrectly.
- **Make vocabulary flash cards.** Mastering vocabulary can be the key to doing well on an exam.
- **Study with a group.** This only works if all the students involved are committed to preparing for a test. They can review vocabulary, go over end-of-chapter questions, handouts and class notes.



Source: R.F. Flippo, *Preparing Students for Testing and Doing Better in School*, Corwin Press.



Counsel your teen to respect teachers

Respect and good manners are important at home *and* at school. To encourage your teen's respect for teachers, expect her to:

- **Arrive on time.** Tardy students distract their classmates during valuable instruction time.
- **Pay attention in class.** By making eye contact and paying attention, your teen is showing her teacher that she values the education she is receiving.
- **Say please and thank you.** Teachers work hard preparing
- **Be loyal.** Your teen shouldn't speak badly of her teachers—even if all the other kids are doing it. Your teen can show her respect by following this rule: "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."

Source: G. Bugwadia, "Teens: How to show respect & admiration for teachers," Helium, www.helium.com/items/1786668-teens-how-to-show-respect-and-admiration-for-your-teachers.

Your expectations matter

Research shows that parents who expect their teens to achieve have a big impact on their academic success. To help your teen:

- **Monitor** homework. Say you expect your teen to keep up with assignments.
- **Talk** about the future. Do you expect your teen to graduate? Tell her so.
- **Discuss** goals. Help your teen set deadlines for projects and plan ways to bring up grades and test scores.

Source: K. Seal, "Great Expectations Create the Best Teen Scholars," www.miller-mccune.com/education/great-expectations-create-the-best-young-scholars-19451/.

Nonfiction spurs reading

Does your teen "hate" reading? Well, maybe he's just reading the wrong books. Teens who dislike fiction books often enjoy nonfiction books—provided you don't mention that they're learning! The Young Adult Library Services Association honors the best young adult nonfiction books.



Check out www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklistsawards/nonfiction/nonfiction.cfm with your teen for books that are sure to spark even the most reluctant reader's interest.

Promote good attendance

Poor attendance is one of the first signs that a student is preparing to drop out of school. If your teen's attendance is worsening, get your teen back into the habit of going to school regularly. By keeping her in school today, you're helping her earn a living in the future.



Source: J. Amos, *Dropouts, Diplomas, and Dollars: US High Schools and the Economy*, Alliance for Excellent Education.



When teens stand out, how can parents help them cope?

Q: My daughter is a real nonconformist. Her clothes, her hairstyle, even the music she listens to are very different from most of the students' in her school. She doesn't seem to have many friends. Still, she's polite and works hard. How can I help her through her high school years?

A: Adolescence is tough enough. But when a teen intentionally sets herself apart, the challenges can become magnified. To help your daughter:



- **Support her.** If she's complying with the school dress code, her hair and clothing aren't worth a fight.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Talk regularly with your daughter. Don't feel that you need to argue with her if you disagree. Sometimes, you can just say, "Well, that's certainly an interesting point of view."
- **Look for her positive qualities.** Praise her in private—and in public. She needs to know that you truly are proud of the things she does.
- **Help her find outlets for her talents.** If she doesn't relate to activities at school, help her find a group of teens in your community. Check the local paper for opportunities for teens.

Your daughter is working hard. That's great! Teens don't have to follow the crowd, but if you ever suspect she is lonely and depressed, talk with her school counselor.



Are you up to date on your teen's life?

Teens want independence. Parents want to know what's going on in their lives. It may seem impossible, but you can keep tabs on your teen without acting like a spy. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're staying informed without resorting to snooping:

1. **Do you encourage** your teen's friends to spend time at your house? Showing up with snacks is always a good way to hear what's going on!
2. **Do you offer** to drive your teen and his friends to school events? If you're quiet, they will forget you're there.
3. **Do you check** your teen's page on social networking sites? Your teen is sharing this information with the public. So he might as well know he's also sharing it with you.

4. **Do you just** "hang out" with your teen sometimes? Watching TV together can sometimes lead to great talks.

How did you do? Each *yes* means you're communicating, not snooping. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said."

—Peter F. Drucker

Scare tactics don't work

Do you try to scare your teen into behaving? "If you don't wear your seat belt and there's an accident, you'll get thrown out of the car and break your neck!"

That logic makes sense, but teens don't think the way that adults do. Teens think bad things happen to other people. They're better at processing what's going on *now* than thinking about abstract situations. A direct statement is more effective than a scare tactic. "If you don't wear your seatbelt, I'm taking away your driving privileges."

Of course, it's still important to give your teen reasonable explanations for why you feel the way you do about serious issues.

Source: D. Witmer, "3 Reasons Why Parents Shouldn't Use Scare Tactics," About.com, http://parentingteens.about.com/od/disciplin1/a/scare_tactics.htm.

Remember to 'show & tell'

When it comes to spending time with teens, it's important to "show and tell." Tell your teen how important he is to you. Show him this by making time for him. Have family dinners. Ask about his day every evening—and really listen to his answers.

Healthy habits help teens focus at homework time

Teens don't always get enough sleep. So when it's time to sit down to do homework, many teens nod off. To help your teen stay awake while studying:

- **Encourage** exercise. Teens who get regular exercise find it easier to fall asleep at night and have more energy during the day.
- **Watch** the snacks. A light snack can help a teen concentrate. But eating too much can make her drowsy.



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