

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



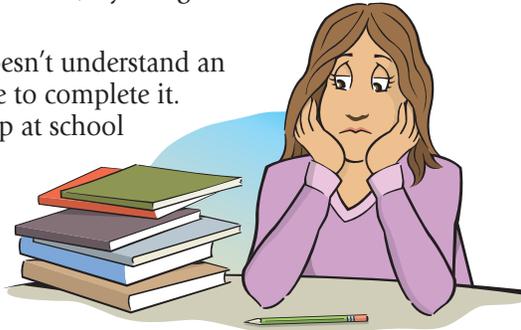
March 2011

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Is homework not getting done?

Completing homework is key to your teen's success in school. If your teen constantly refuses to do her homework, try to figure out why. Some reasons may be:

- **Frustration.** If your teen doesn't understand an assignment, she won't be able to complete it. See that she asks for extra help at school when needed.
- **Disorganization.** Have your teen choose a regular time and place to do her homework—and a spot to keep completed homework so it makes it back to school.
- **Forgetfulness.** Teach your teen to use reminders, such as daily to-do lists and a planner, to keep track of what she needs to bring home to complete her homework.
- **Distractions.** Encourage your teen to stick to a schedule—for example, 30 minutes of homework, then 5 minutes of checking her email.
- **Lack of time.** It's great if your teen has a part-time job or is involved in extracurricular activities. However, homework still needs to be her number one priority.
- **Stress.** Severe procrastination can be a sign that your child is angry or depressed. Consulting a school counselor can help.



Ask your teen what she sees as the problem. Is she overscheduled with too many activities? Is she tired from staying up late? Is she distracted by TV, text messages or the computer? Discuss what she can do to get back on track.



Share tips for success on math tests

If an upcoming math test has your teen stressed out, suggest some simple strategies to use during the test. Encourage him to:

- **Estimate.** Using "educated guesses" is a good way to narrow down the choices for multiple choice questions.
- **Compare.** Have your teen compare a test problem to others he has solved. What is similar? Will those strategies work on this problem?
- **Draw.** If your teen is a visual learner, drawing a picture may help him "see" how to go about solving the problem.
- **Evaluate.** Your teen should ask himself if the answer makes sense. For example, if he is solving for x in $x + 1 = 4$ and gets an answer of 372, he may have done something incorrectly. He should go back and check his work.

Source: Ron Fry, *Ace Any Test*, ISBN: 1-4018-8912-3, Delmar Cengage Learning.

Awareness combats bullies

Incidents of bullying have increased in recent years. Read the school policy on bullying with your teen. Stress that if he observes a bullying situation, he should report it immediately to you, a favorite teacher or the principal.

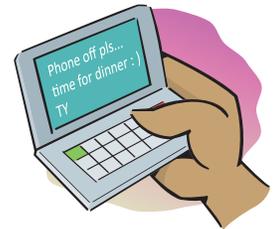
Dine together once a week

Dinner is a great opportunity to reconnect with your teen. Family dinners strengthen relationships, teach good eating habits, and help prevent substance abuse.

So try to make one night a week "Family Dinner Night."

Here's how:

- **Turn off** your phones.
- **Consider** letting your teen choose what to eat. Or have her help you cook the meal—she'll learn an important life skill, and you'll squeeze in some extra time together.
- **Keep** conversation light. Try to avoid topics that could lead to arguing. Ask your teen about her day, and talk about your own.



Monitor school progress

Don't wait for the next report card. Monitor your teen's progress often. Here's how:

- **Stay informed.** Check teachers' websites. Know when tests are scheduled and projects are due.
- **Check returned homework,** quizzes and tests. If you see low grades, talk with your teen and his teacher. Ask what your teen can do now to bring his grades up.





How can parents keep an eye on technology use?

Q: My son is a great kid, but with all the stories I hear about teen behavior today, I wonder if I should be monitoring him more closely. Should I check to see what Internet sites he visits? Should I look at his Facebook site?

A: Technology offers a whole new world to today's teens. But teens may not realize that what they do online now can affect them forever—after all, Google never forgets.



Remember, there's a fine line between keeping track of your son and spying on him. To keep your son safe while respecting his growing independence:

- **Keep the computer where you can see it.** Talk to your son about what you see. Ask him to show you his Facebook page or to tell you with whom he's chatting.
- **Establish rules about cell phone use.** Don't allow texting late at night. Tell your teen that you reserve the right to look at his phone whenever you want to. This doesn't mean that you have to check it every afternoon (or even *ever*). The idea that you *might* see what he sends will make him think twice before sending inappropriate texts or explicit photos.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Spend one-on-one time with your son. It may seem old fashioned, but it is still the best way to keep track of his life.



Is your teen avoiding 'senior-itis'?

There's no official medical disease called "senior-itis." But teachers see its symptoms—seniors don't want to study or come to class. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen avoid this ailment:

- ___ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about keeping her grades up? Colleges do take back their offers of admission!
- ___ **2. Are you making sure** her attendance doesn't slip?
- ___ **3. Are you keeping** rules in place? ("I know you may be doing different things next year. But our rules will still be enforced this year.")
- ___ **4. Is your teen trying** some adult experiences—interning in an office, volunteering for a cause she believes in?

- ___ **5. Are you trying** to relax and enjoy your teen's senior year?

How did you do? Each yes means you're trying to keep your teen from a bad case of "senior-itis." For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

*"Graduation is not the end—it's the beginning."
—Orrin Hatch*

Avoid power struggles

Power struggles with your teen can be exhausting. Instead of arguing, look for ways to involve your teen in making decisions. Asking, "When can you do the dishes so you still have time to watch your TV show tonight?" may eliminate a fight—and still get the dishes washed.

Watch for warning signs

Could your teen be at risk of dropping out? Contact the school when you see:

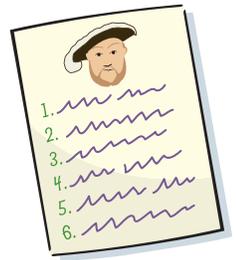
- **Absences.** Teens who fall behind in their studies may be tempted to give up entirely.
- **Poor grades.** Failing math, science, English or social studies may keep your teen from being promoted.
- **Behavior problems.** These can signal disengagement with school.

Source: "Approaches to Dropout Prevention: Heeding Early Warning Signs with Appropriate Interventions," National High School Center, www.betterhighschools.org/docs/NHSC_ApproachesToDropoutPrevention.pdf.

Self-testing leads to success

One easy way to review for a test is to test yourself. Suggest that your teen:

- **Learn the facts.** A certain number of questions will likely be on straight facts. For example, she may quiz herself on the names of the wives of King Henry VIII.
- **Pose questions** that make her think critically about the facts. How did King Henry's divorces change the view of divorce in his time? How does that differ from the way we view it today?



Source: J. S. Schumm, Ph.D., "How to Predict Test Questions," About.com, <http://teenadvice.about.com/library/weekly/aa030501a.htm>.

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.

Copyright © 2011, 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 • ISSN 1527-103x