

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

## Tackle behavior issues with a digital tool: 'e-grounding'

You want your teen to do well in school, and you know that discipline is sometimes necessary to refocus her attention on her studies. But if sending her to her room doesn't have quite the bite it used to—especially if she has a cellphone or computer in there with her—you may need to search for a better strategy. Next time, you may want to try digitally grounding your teen.

Digital grounding, or "e-grounding," means restricting access to technology. It isn't always easy—especially when your teen needs to use the computer for homework or a cell phone to call you to pick her up from practice.

Here are some parents' suggestions to make e-grounding effective:

- **Go for the most-prized possession.** If it's too much hassle to limit all technology, aim for the item she loves most. If she's always texting, make her phone off-limits temporarily.
- **Change the password.** Your teen won't be able to access the Internet if you change the network password. She'll have to ask you for it—and you'll get a chance to remind her about your rules for Internet use.
- **Get help.** If you don't feel tech-savvy enough to limit things on your own, call your Internet or cell service provider. Many companies offer tools that allow you to restrict use of their services—like letting texts be sent or received only during certain hours.



Source: J. Ludden and A. Lenhart, "E-Grounding: Parents' New Disciplinary Weapon," NPR, [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129727769](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=129727769).



## When it comes to reading, more is more

It is important that your teen do the reading that's assigned for school. But research shows that the reading he does for fun also improves school success.

Many teens never read anything that isn't assigned. They spend less than two percent of their free time reading. Yet studies show teens who read outside of school:

- **Develop larger vocabularies.**
- **Build comprehension skills.**
- **Get better grades.**
- **Score higher on achievement tests.**
- **Go to better colleges.**

What can you do to encourage your teen to read more? Keep plenty of reading material around on a variety of topics. Don't worry if he isn't reading "heavy" material. Light reading leads to more reading. Look for articles online to share with your teen. Give him books you liked at his age. And turn off the TV for 30 minutes a day so everyone can read.

Source: B.E. Cullinan, "Independent Reading and School Achievement," American Association of School Librarians, <http://tinyurl.com/dx5buc>.

## Help your teen select good sources for online news

More than six in 10 teens go online to find out about current events. But not all websites present the news in a balanced way. Share unbiased news sites with your teen, and learn which she uses. Pick a news item and see which sites cover it most comprehensively. Bookmark those for return visits.

Source: A. Lenhart et. al., "Social Media and Young Adults," Pew Internet and American Life Project.

## Bring math to life at home

High school math is often abstract. But you can make everyday math real for your teen:

- **Make it a game.** Each of you takes half a deck of cards. You each flip a card at the same time. The first one to multiply the card numbers out loud takes the cards. The player with the most at the end wins.
- **Use what you know.** When you need to figure out how much mulch to buy to fill a flower bed, or have to cut at a 45-degree angle, involve your teen. He'll learn how crucial math skills are.



Source: M. Curtain-Phillips, M.Ed., "Manipulatives: The Missing Link in High School Math," Math Goodies, [www.mathgoodies.com/articles/manipulatives.html](http://www.mathgoodies.com/articles/manipulatives.html).

## Face barriers with strengths

High school students face many challenges, but your teen can overcome them with this four-step process. She should identify her:



1. **Strengths.** Remember what she's good at.
2. **Weaknesses.** Plan ways to compensate for the things she's less good at.
3. **Opportunities.** Look ahead and grab chances to act on her plan.
4. **Threats.** Think about obstacles before they occur, and include them in her plan.

Source: "SWOT Analysis," MindTools, [www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_05.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05.htm).



## Help with homework—how much is too much?

**Q: I know many teens don't talk with their parents. Mine does—about every five minutes when he's doing homework. If he's writing an essay, he asks, "What's the best way to say this?" If he's doing math, he wants me to check whether he's doing things right. He's struggling in many of his classes and I don't want him to fail. But I also want to stop doing his homework. What should I do?**

**A:** While it may be okay to help with homework in early grades, that should stop in high school. From now on, err on the side of doing too little, rather than too much.

Right now you're encouraging your teen to be dependent. He knows you'll check his math, so he doesn't have to. And more importantly, you're making it harder for his teachers to figure out why he's having difficulty.

Share your concerns with your teen, and tell him you think your help has not been very helpful. Set some limits on what you will do. You *will* help him get organized. You *will* act as a sounding board when he's figuring out what to write. But you are going to back off from your current level of involvement.

There may be a rough time while he adjusts. But when you do less, he'll have to do more. And together with his teachers, he can work on his skills and bring up his grades.



## Is your teen taking the right courses?

The success of your teen's high school academic plan depends on his signing up for classes that meet his long-term goals. Your input is important.

Are you helping your teen stay on the right track? Answer *yes* or *no*.

1. **Do you meet** with your teen and his counselor to discuss his goals?
2. **Do you make sure** your teen is taking the classes he will need to be admitted to college, if he plans to go?
3. **Do you help** your teen choose electives that help him meet his goals?
4. **Do you talk** with your teen about how important grades are, particularly if he is a senior? Slacking off will not

help him prepare for college or a job.

### How are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are steering your teen toward success. For each *no*, try the tip from the quiz.

“Maturity is when your world opens up and you realize that you are not the center of it.”

—M.J. Croan

## Make use of muscle memory

Memorizing facts can be boring. Inject some fun into the process by trying this game:

- **Get a set of colored index cards.** On one color (say, yellow), write down a word or key concept. Use another (blue) for its definition. Make at least 24 pairs.
- **Mix the cards** and lay them out face up on the floor. Have your teen put her left foot on a yellow card, then her right foot on the corresponding blue card. Without moving her feet, repeat with her hands.

Whether with a study group or even alone, your teen will stay awake while she studies.

Source: A. Crossman, *Study Smart, Study Less*, Ten Speed Press.

## Help your teen sleep at night—not in class

Most teens need about nine hours of sleep a night, but get only about seven. Lack of sleep affects learning and memory—which in turn affects school success. Have your teen:

- **Stick to a bedtime.**
- **Keep his room cool and quiet.**
- **Limit weekend oversleeping** to an hour or two, at most.

## Respect breeds respect

Respect is a two-way street. Your teen can earn the respect of her teachers, classmates, friends and family by demonstrating respect for *them*. She should be sure to:

- **Speak clearly**, and address people properly (yes, Coach). *Please* and *thank you* add a lot.
- **Use positive body language.** Eye contact, not eye rolling.
- **Have a good attitude.** Keep cool, even while disagreeing.



Source: G. Vassar, "Respect: One Antidote for Shame," Lakeside Educational Network.

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