

# 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

## The road to college winds through all high school grades

You plan for your teen to attend college. But is she doing what's necessary to make that happen? Teens in all grades can take steps to get ready for college.

In ninth grade your teen should:

- **Take the most rigorous courses** she is capable of and take part in school activities.
- **Begin learning about programs** and colleges that interest her.
- **Create a résumé** of her activities, sports and leadership roles. Update it each year.

In tenth grade:

- **Pay attention to 11th grade courses** when registering for 10th grade classes. Take any needed prerequisites.
- **Browse the websites** of colleges that appeal to her.
- **Find a productive summer activity**, such as a job or volunteer work.

In 11th grade:

- **Work with the guidance counselor** to target colleges to apply to.
- **Visit colleges** during school breaks. Take virtual tours online.
- **Begin college application essays.**

During the fall of senior year:

- **Take the SAT or ACT.**
- **Ask teachers** to write letters of recommendation.
- **Finish essays** and send completed applications.



## Take a trip to the library

Help your teen use more than Google to research a paper. Try these library resources:

- **The online catalog.** Your teen can try different search terms to see what works.
- **Newspapers** and periodicals. She can look for eyewitness accounts of history.
- **The librarian**, who can point your teen to sources she may not know about.

## Get beyond 'what' to 'why'

High school students need to be able to recall facts and relate them to other ideas. To help your teen go beyond just memorizing:



- **Challenge him** to form opinions—and defend them. If he says there should be a stop sign in front of the school, ask why? Have him outline his ideas in a letter to the town council.
- **Watch TV and talk** about the ads. Why does he think they are effective?
- **Explain your reasons** when you set limits with your teen.

Source: C. Gearon, "High School Students Need to Think, Not Memorize," U.S. News & World Report, [niscw.com/saywhy](http://niscw.com/saywhy).



## You and your teen have a helpful ally

Guidance counselors are professionals, trained to support your teen's academic and social development. Contact your teen's counselor if:

- **You have questions** about your teen's classes. You can ask about scheduling for next year or about any issues your teen has with his current classes.
- **You are concerned** about your teen's behavior. Guidance counselors can help teens identify and work through difficult issues. Remind your teen that his counselor is a trusted adult he can talk to about any concerns he has.
- **Your teen's grades** are poor or slipping. The counselor can help you and your teen figure out the source of academic problems and develop a solution.
- **You have questions** about your teen's future. The counselor has advice on colleges and careers, and tips for reaching your teen's post-graduation goals.

Source: "Why Secondary School Counselors?" ASCA, [niscw.com/ally](http://niscw.com/ally).

## Cool down a 'spring fever'

As the weather warms, would your teen rather go out than study? To keep a case of "spring fever" under control:



- **Talk about risks.** Make sure your teen knows your values and can make an informed decision in an uncomfortable situation.
- **Insist on checking in.** Always know where your teen is, who she's with, what she's doing and when she'll be home. Together, decide on a way for her to check in with you.

Source: "10 Parenting Tips for Raising Teenagers," WebMD, [niscw.com/springfever](http://niscw.com/springfever).



## How can I help my teen figure out his career path?

**Q:** My son is a junior, and we're starting to think about what he'll do after high school. His friends seem to know the types of jobs they want to prepare for. But my son doesn't have any ideas about what he might like to do. How can I help him focus his thinking?

**A:** Choosing a career is a big decision. And starting early gives your son time to take the classes or training he'll need. Try these steps together to help him weigh his options:



- 1. Think about the subjects he enjoys** in school. His preferences may help him know what to look for in a career. A kid who wants to find "the right answer" may enjoy fields like engineering or accounting.
- 2. Consider things he does for fun.** Does he like to work with his hands? Spend time outdoors? Would he prefer to be with a group of friends or is he happier spending time with one or two people?
- 3. Ask his counselor what resources are available** to help your son assess his choices. Can he take a career test?
- 4. Look for opportunities for practical experience.** Could your son shadow someone for a day or two in a career that might interest him?

Try not to push your teen in a direction because it's something *you* want. Your job is to guide him toward the future that is the best fit for him.



## Do you talk about the tough stuff?

Challenges are a part of life. Your teen must deal with tough classes, social issues and disturbing news of the world. The way you talk about these topics matters. Are you helping your teen take on challenges? Answer *yes* or *no*:

- 1. Do you bring up** the topic of a challenge your teen is facing without waiting for her to start the conversation?
- 2. Do you have** a rule that you and your teen should be honest about tough issues?
- 3. Do you create** opportunities to talk to your teen every day?
- 4. Do you let** your teen know that one talk can't always solve a serious issue? It may take many days or weeks to find a solution.

- 5. Do you talk** with your teen about your family's values?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are teaching your teen to handle difficult issues. For each no, try that idea.*

*"Always walk through life as if you have something new to learn, and you will."*

*—Vernon Howard*

## Keep attendance in mind

Regular attendance in school is important all year long. And spring is no exception. Remind your teen that:

- **Testing often occurs in the spring.** Your teen will learn critical information every day that will help him excel on standardized tests and classroom exams.
- **School is his job.** You can't skip work when you don't feel like going, and your teen isn't allowed to miss school either.
- **A friend can help** him stay motivated. Together, they can develop a plan to pay attention in class every day.

## Try a homework checklist

Does your teen frequently open her backpack only to realize the book she needs for her homework is at school?



Try having her make a checklist of items she needs to bring home each night, such as textbooks, binders, library books and gym clothes. She can tape it to the front of her planner or the inside of her locker. It will help her avoid frustration and allow her to focus on studying.

## Encourage reading workouts

There is nothing wrong with reading for enjoyment. But to be ready for college and careers, teens need to read more complex material, too. To motivate your teen:

- **Talk about building strength.** Making a muscle stronger involves lifting weights. Strengthening reading skills involves reading harder content.
- **Make sure he does the reading** for all his classes.
- **Be a role model.** Read a book that challenges you. Discuss it with your teen.

Source: "What Kids Are Reading: And Why It Matters," Renaissance Learning, [niswc.com/workout](http://niswc.com/workout).

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