

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



May 2011

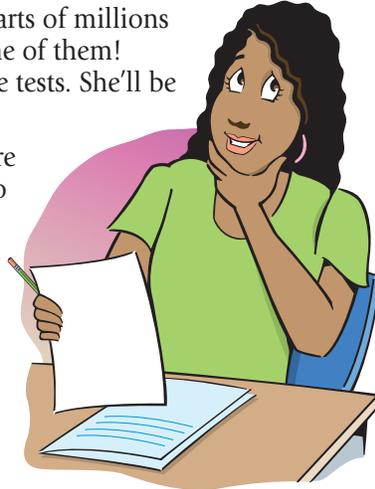
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Educational Service Unit 10

## Tried-and-true test tips can keep your teen calm during exams

End-of-the-year exams strike fear into the hearts of millions of teens. But your teen doesn't need to be one of them! Point out that she already knows how to take tests. She'll be more successful if she remembers to:

- **Read the directions.** Can there be more than one correct answer? Does she have to show her work?
- **Look over the entire test** before answering any questions. She should note the point value on each question and budget her time accordingly.
- **Answer the easy questions first.** This builds confidence.
- **Return to the difficult questions.** While working on the easy questions, her mind may recall answers to the harder ones. A later question may help jog her memory about something she forgot on an earlier question.
- **Circle key words** in long or difficult-to-understand questions. This will force her to focus on the most important points.
- **Rewrite difficult questions.** When she sees the question in her own words, she may get a better idea of the answer.
- **Write a quick outline** before answering essay questions.
- **Use all the time available.** If she finishes early, she should cover up her answers and rework some questions. She should check her answer sheet. Is the answer to question 41 on line 41?

Remind your teen that she has worked hard. She read all the assignments. She did the homework. She's ready to do her best.



## Schedule final events on a big calendar

Teens don't have a very good sense of time. Your teen may think he has three weeks until a big project is due, but he's forgetting the math test, the track meet and the book report that are also coming up.

Nagging won't work. Sit down with him and a big calendar. Start by having him cross out all the days he won't be working on the project

(the day before the math test, the day of the track meet, etc.).

How many days are left? Not as many as he thought! Don't let him panic. Remind him that the busier people are, the more they often accomplish. But he will have to get busy—*today*.

Source: Donna Goldberg, *The Organized Student*, ISBN: 9780-7432-7020-5, Simon & Schuster.

## Keep track of summer time

This summer have your teen use a chart to keep track of the hours per week he spends watching TV and browsing online. He may be surprised by how much time he actually spends staring at a screen. Encourage him to make time for other activities—like reading.

## Embrace summer writing

Encouraging your teen to begin a writing assignment over the summer can seem like a difficult task. But teachers don't assign them just to torture parents and students alike! Summer writing assignments can help teens focus on improving their writing at a time when they don't have other responsibilities. Just remind your teen that she needs to:

- **Follow** the directions.
- **Remember** that first impressions matter. This assignment will help shape what next year's teacher thinks of your teen.



## Exercise should be part of your teen's summer routine

Don't let your teen turn into a summer couch potato! Teens who exercise regularly:

- **Are less likely** to be overweight.
- **Have stronger bones** and muscles.
- **Sleep better.**
- **Are less stressed.**
- **Have higher self-esteem.**



The key is to make exercise fun. He can run with friends, swim, play tennis or join a summer softball league. Whatever he decides to do, be supportive of his choice.

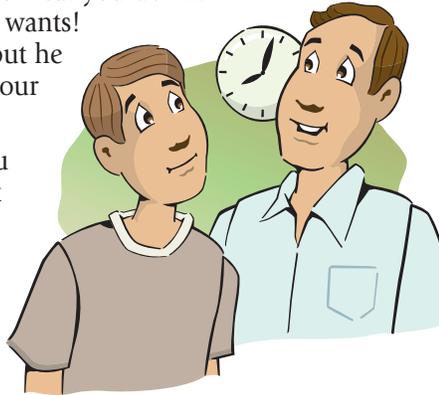


## How can parents get teens to respect curfews, rules?

**Q:** I'm starting to think my son has a hearing problem. When I tell him about something I expect him to do (or not do), it's like I never said anything. Sometimes, I feel like just giving up. I want to enforce a curfew this summer, but I'm not sure I have the strength to stick with it. What should I do?

**A:** Giving up is exactly what your son would like you to do. He's smart enough to figure that he may be able to wear you down. Then he'll get to come in whenever he wants! He doesn't have a hearing problem—but he does have a *listening* problem. To get your son's attention:

- **Be prepared to repeat** what you have said—up to three times. Think of this as the “three times” rule.
- **Tell him exactly** what the consequences will be if he comes in after your curfew.
- **Enforce your rule.** Do that whenever he misses curfew.



You are raising your son to be an independent adult. But he's not ready to be on his own yet. By enforcing the rules every time, you're teaching him that you will follow through on your words. Once he sees that you really do mean what you say—and that there are consequences for breaking rules—you'll probably find that his “hearing problem” will go away.



## Is your teen a good money manager?

In today's economy, learning how to manage money is a critical skill—one that will help your teen for the rest of her life. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen learn the value of a dollar:

1. **Have you helped** your teen learn how to set a budget—and live with it?
2. **Does your teen** have a savings account?
3. **Have you helped** your teen set up a checking account? Does she have an ATM card? Do you help her balance the account each month to see where her money goes?
4. **Do you avoid** bailing out your teen? If she runs out of money before the end of the week, do you refuse to give her an advance on her allowance?

5. **Have you talked about** saving money for the future, like for college or a car?

**How did you do?** Each yes answer means you're helping your teen learn the value of money. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“The safe way to double your money is to fold it over once and put it in your pocket.”

—Frank Hubbard

## Set goals with a review

Take a look at your teen's final report card with her. Reviewing this year gives your teen a “benchmark” from which to set next year's academic goals. Ask your teen:

- **Did you do** as well as you had hoped?
- **Do you feel** that this report card reflects what you learned?
- **What was your** favorite class and why?
- **What was your** least favorite and why?

Ask what she would like to improve by the end of *next* year. Does she want to raise her English grade from a B to a B+? Encourage your teen to come up with a list of goals she'd like to accomplish.

Whatever plan she comes up with to reach her goal, show your support. Point out that it's never too late to begin again—this year doesn't have to set the tone for her entire high school career. Knowing that you believe in her is great motivation for your teen to reach her goals.

## Share tips for summer jobs

Prepare your teen for “the real world” by reminding him that a summer job requires:

- **Punctuality.** Nothing is more important than being on time.
- **Teamwork.** He'll have to take direction from a supervisor and work with other employees.
- **Courtesy.** Your teen will need to be polite and helpful.
- **Professionalism.** He may have to comply with a dress code and limit cell phone use.



Remind your teen that a summer job isn't just a way to get a paycheck. It's an experience that teaches him important skills and could lead to another job or internship—or at the very least, a good recommendation.

### Helping Students Learn®

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