

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

Study strategies help teens face finals with confidence

The end of the school year brings much excitement, but for most high school students, it also brings the challenge of final exams. Help your teen prepare for these upcoming tests by reminding her to use the following study strategies:



- **Prioritize study needs.** Your teen should find out what will be covered on the exam. Will it be new material since the last test, or will it be a review of the entire semester or year? She should spend some time reviewing material she's already mastered, but focus mostly on learning information that she's unsure of.
- **Organize time.** Your teen should make a schedule for studying and stick to it. She should avoid delaying study time until late at night.
- **Use extra time.** Ten minutes here and there really add up. Your teen can use waiting time before sports practice or at the bus stop. She should always keep study materials, such as flash cards or outlines, handy for unexpected study sessions.
- **Study with a partner** or group only when everyone is prepared to discuss material that may be on the exam and think through concepts that may be covered in essay questions.
- **Make a practice test.** Your teen can turn facts into questions and write down concepts that could be used as essay questions. Then she can talk through answers or practice writing them within a time limit.

Source: P. Epstein, "How to Study for a High School Final Exam," eHow, niswc.com/finalprep.



Help your teen reduce year-end stress

Teens must juggle many school priorities—papers, AP tests, auditions and practices, to name a few. That can leave some feeling overwhelmed. And since stressed teens are rarely at their best, their performance often suffers. To help your teen cope with the stress that comes this time of year:

- **Listen.** Sometimes, just giving your teen a chance to let off steam can be effective. Don't try to fix his problems. Just let him talk.
- **Encourage** him to come up with his own solutions. Ask questions to help him figure out a way to work through a problem. He's more likely to stick with a solution if he developed it.
- **Teach** him some stress relievers. Taking a few deep breaths before facing a challenge can make him feel more in control. Eating a healthy snack will give him energy to keep going—but high-caffeine drinks will make him more agitated.

Source: E. Block, "Helping Teens Deal with End of School Year Stress," Examiner.com, www.examiner.com/article/helping-teens-deal-with-end-of-school-year-stress.

Make time for sleep

Teens need between 8.5 and 9.25 hours of sleep a night to function at their best the next day. But only 15 percent report getting that much. To help your teen do it:



- **Set a sleep schedule.** Sticking to it on weekends, too, makes weekdays easier.
- **Encourage her to avoid** eating, drinking or exercising right before bed.

Act now to end cheating

Many high school students cheat in school at one point or another—probably because they don't view cheating as a serious offense. So what can you do to keep your student academically honest? You can:

- **Talk to your teen.** Explain that it may seem like "everybody does it," but cheating is wrong.
- **Check your expectations.** Are they unrealistic? Assure your teen that you'd rather he do his best and earn a lower grade than score higher by cheating.
- **Show your teen** ways he can use the material he's being taught in real life. He may be motivated to actually learn it.

Relaxing includes reading!

Some teens think that time off from school means time off from reading. They couldn't be more wrong! To keep your teen reading this summer:



- **Find a summer reading program.** Many libraries sponsor programs for teens, such as competitions and book clubs.
- **Read a book** together and then see the movie version. Discuss which version your teen prefers, and why.
- **Redefine reading.** Many students prefer nonfiction to literary classics.

Source: "Primer on Summer Learning Loss," Reading is Fundamental, niswc.com/keepreading.



Can I stop my teen from dropping out of school?

Q: My son is failing two classes. He has missed a lot of school this year—sometimes because he stayed home and sometimes because he cut classes. Now he wants to drop out. Is there anything I can say or do?

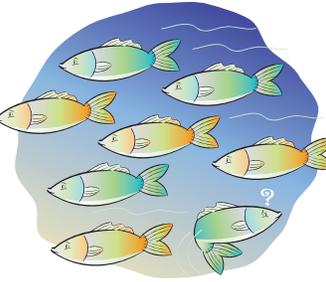
A: You *can* help keep your son in school. The first thing to do is to figure out exactly why he is thinking of dropping out. Then you can work with the school to get him back on track.

Students who fall behind in one or more classes often begin to feel that there is no way they can ever catch up. If that's what's bothering your teen, then the two of you need to talk with his teachers. Can he make up the missed work? Or can he work with a tutor to get caught up?

If your teen can't make everything up before the end of the year, work with his counselor to help him plan what he needs to do to graduate on time. Are there summer school courses he could take?

You also need to help him see why staying in school is so important. Have him do some research on the kinds of jobs he can get without a high school diploma. Yes, a minimum wage job (if he can get one) may seem fine now if he's living at home. But how far will that money go when he wants to move out, drive a car and lead an independent life?

From now on, monitor your teen's attendance. Ask him to commit to being in every class, every day.



Is your teen ready to celebrate safely?

Graduation is an achievement worth celebrating. But when teens celebrate, risky behavior and the peer pressure to join in it are often guests at the party. Are you preparing your teen to resist that pressure? Answer *yes* or *no*:

1. **Have you discussed** the school's behavior code and what could be at risk at school if your teen is caught drinking?
2. **Have you made it clear** that teen drinking is against the law and can cause your teen serious legal problems?
3. **Do you call** other parents before letting your teen attend a party at their house to make sure they will be there?
4. **Have you practiced** with your teen ways to say *no* to people who pressure her?

5. **Does your teen know** you will pick her up from a party with no questions asked?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen resist negative peer pressure. For each no, try that idea.

*"Nobody can go back and start a new beginning. But anyone can start today and make a new ending."
—Maria Robinson*

Responsibility is learned

Self-discipline and responsibility are key traits of successful students. To foster them in your teen, have him:

- **Use a calendar to manage time.** Seeing his test, project and activity dates will help him determine how much time he has to accomplish assignments.
- **Schedule his own appointments.**
- **Set a budget and stick to it.** He may learn that saving is more rewarding than buying another shirt.
- **Plan a family outing**—even just a local day trip. He should make a family budget for travel and meal expenses.

Put time and talent to work

Volunteering over the summer offers teens a chance to learn lessons they won't get in the classroom and help others at the same time. To help your teen make the most of it:

- **Consider her interests.** If she wants to be a doctor, can she work in a hospital? Let your teen take the lead in looking for a volunteer opportunity.
- **Expect a commitment.** Dependability is an important lesson for her to learn.

Source: M. Price-Mitchell, "What's Summer? Hands-On Learning Time for Teens!" *Psychology Today*, niswc.com/summerlesson.

Is that tweet complete?

One way to help teens improve their writing is to focus on social media. Challenge your teen to:



- **Compose complete responses** to posts by others. How many times can one teen respond with LOL, anyway?
- **Check messages and posts** for misspelled words and incorrect grammar. Abandoning these basics makes it harder to write correctly when it's needed.

Source: A. Lenhart and others, "Writing, Technology and Teens," Pew Internet & American Life Project, niswc.com/social-write.

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