

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Summer school allows students to make progress toward goals

Your teen may be dreaming of a long break from her studies. Or she may be looking forward to a summer job. But now is the time to consider some reasons why she may want to add summer school to her vacation plans.

While summer school may not be right for every student, it can help some teens:

- 1. Master a difficult subject.** If your teen anticipates that a class might be challenging next year, she may want to take it this summer, when she will be able to give it her full attention.
- 2. Gain credits toward graduation.** If your teen failed a course, she may be able to retake it in summer school. If she has been in classes for English language learners, she may want to try a standard class.
- 3. Make time for an elective.** A student in a demanding academic program may not have time for an elective that interests her. If the elective isn't offered in summer school, taking a required class this summer can make room for the elective in your teen's school-year schedule.

If your teen decides to take a class over the summer, make sure she knows how important it will be to attend all classes and complete the assignments. Because summer classes are taught in such a short time period, missing even one day's homework can put her far behind.



Organization helps lift a heavy load

This time of year, high school students are faced with final exams and year-end assignments. So much homework and studying can overwhelm some students. To help your teen manage successfully, remind him to:

- **Schedule** a regular time for homework. Some teens like to study in the afternoon; others do best later at night. Have your teen stick to a time that works for him.
- **Keep track** of key dates. Your teen should write exam dates and assignment due dates down on a calendar and check it daily.
- **Jot down** reminder notes during the school day. Seeing a "Bring history book home" sticky note on his binder will help your teen make sure he has what he needs.
- **Avoid** distractions. TV, computer and phone time should always be limited, but when your teen's workload is heavy, screen time limits are even more important.

Source: P. Benson and others, *What Teens Need to Succeed: Proven Practical Ways to Shape Your Own Future*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Refresh attendance efforts

By May, some teens decide that the school year is already over. They skip school. They go out for lunch and don't come back.

Remind your teen that being in class on time every day is as important now as it was in September. What's more, she'll develop attendance habits that will improve her chance of success in college and a career.

Your teen can learn responsibility on the job

Is your teen considering a first step into the workforce this summer? Summer jobs teach students valuable lessons about responsibility and respect—important factors in school success. A job can teach your teen to:



- **Work with others.** Your teen will have to cooperate with coworkers and take direction from a supervisor.
- **Behave professionally.** His behavior will reflect on the company.
- **Interact with customers.** Your teen will need to be polite and helpful to all kinds of people.
- **Think about his future.** He can decide if this line of work suits him.

Look ahead to next year

This is a great time for your teen to decide on her goals for next year. When helping her set expectations:



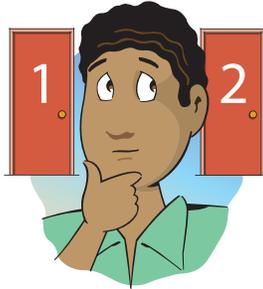
- **Be realistic.** Turning in homework every day may be a more reasonable goal than aiming for straight A's.
- **Play to your teen's strengths.** Challenge her to improve at something she loves.
- **Avoid comparing** your teen to others. Her goals should be appropriate for her.



How can I help my teen learn to make decisions?

Q: My son can never make up his mind. If he can't decide what to eat for lunch, how will he make the choices that will help him in and out of school? How can I teach him to make a wise decision?

A: Decision-making is tough for most teens. For some, it can lead to almost total paralysis. But it is a critical skill for success in school and life. To strengthen your teen's ability to decide:



- **Give him opportunities to make low-risk decisions.** Suppose he is responsible for mowing the lawn every week. On Monday, say, "The lawn needs to be mowed before this weekend. You choose when you will mow it." Don't nag him during the week. Let him decide when to mow. When he does it, be sure to thank him for getting the job done.
- **Teach him to write down the pros and cons.** When he's faced with a choice, have him make a list of positive and negative consequences for each option. Seeing things written down can make the choice easier.
- **Remind him that mistakes are just opportunities to learn.** Some teens don't make decisions because they are worried about making the wrong one. Let your son know that in life, things don't always work out the way we plan—and that's OK. He will learn something from any choice he makes, even if it's simply what not to do next time.
- **Help him set deadlines for his decisions.** "Remember, you have until Tuesday to decide if you want to accept Mr. Smith's job offer."



Can your teen handle peer pressure?

Peer pressure can be positive: Your teen volunteers because her friends do. But it can also be negative: She skips a class because her friend is doing it. Are you helping your teen resist negative peer pressure? Answer *yes* or *no*:

1. **Do you tell** your teen to take pride in her accomplishments? "You should be proud of yourself for ..."
2. **Do you encourage** your teen to sign up for classes and activities that interest her?
3. **Do you remind** your teen to respect herself and never to do anything that will make her lose her self-respect?
4. **Do you encourage** your teen to think of herself as an individual?

5. **Do you help** your teen practice ways to say *no*?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you're preparing your teen to resist negative peer pressure. For each no, try that idea.

"We must return optimism to our parenting. To focus on the joys, not the hassles; the love, not the disappointments; the common sense, not the complexities."

—Fred G. Gosman

Summer reading pays off

Research shows that teens who read over the summer benefit academically. This summer:

- **Challenge your teen** to read at least four books. One study found that the more books students read during the summer, the higher their academic gains.
- **Encourage your teen** to keep track of new words he learns. Teens who read one million words a year add at least a thousand words to their vocabularies.
- **Ask your teen** to write reviews of what he reads.

Source: K. Houck and A. Simon, "Highlights of Research on Summer Reading and Effects on Student Achievement," New York State Library, niswc.com/summerread.

The future starts now

It's never too early for your teen to get a head start on her future. Discuss what she plans to do after graduation—even if it seems far away. Encourage her to:



- **Research colleges** she might like to attend and prepare for the ACT or SAT.
- **Research education requirements** for careers she is interested in.

Refocus your teen's mind

Does warm weather seem to shorten your teen's attention span? To make sure that he isn't dreaming about the outdoors when he should be doing homework:

- **Talk about it.** Ask questions about his assignments. What does he find interesting? Challenging?
- **Time it.** If he spent three hours a night studying earlier in the year and spends 15 minutes now, be suspicious. Simply asking "Why are you spending less time on homework?" may fix the problem.
- **Combine it.** Suggest he read outside, or shoot hoops while you quiz him on science terms.

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