

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Educational Service Unit 10

Know how to calm typical teen tantrums

Teens aren't known to be the most calm, cool and collected people on the planet. Instead, they seem to scream and slam doors at the slightest provocation.

But your home doesn't have to be a battleground. Here are some things you can do:

- **Don't respond in kind.** Rather than exploding, walk away.
- **Control what you can.** Stay calm. Listen to what your teen is really saying. That's the first step toward solving the problem.
- **Say, "Let's talk about this later."** Find a time when you can both open up to talk about what's going on.
- **Spend time with your teen** when she isn't angry. Invite her to watch a movie with you or go out for ice cream. These positive times will help you build a relationship based on trust.
- **Set up consequences.** Tell her that you expect her to speak in a respectful tone of voice, even if she is upset. If she screams, stomps her feet or slams doors, limit her TV or phone time.
- **Make an appointment** with her teachers or guidance counselor. Find out if she displays her anger at school. Ask for their suggestions on how to help your daughter.



Avoid interrogating teens

How you ask questions can set the tone for conversations with your teen. For example, he comes in late after curfew. You'll be:

- **Off to a poor start** if you ask, "What's your excuse this time?"
- **Off to a better start** if you ask, "What can you do next time so I won't be so worried?"

Source: SiriNam S. Khalsa, *Teaching Discipline & Self-Respect*, ISBN: 9781-4129-1548-9, Corwin Press.

Reading for pleasure works!

Teens who read for pleasure have strong thinking skills. They usually do well in school. Yet many teens rarely pick up a book or magazine unless a teacher has assigned them to do it. To encourage reading:

- **Rent a movie** that was based on a book. Read the book, then watch the movie together.
- **Read before bedtime.** Many teens are "night people." Suggest your teen wind down with 20 minutes of reading each evening.



Share tips for remembering vocabulary

Mastering vocabulary is often the first step toward success in any subject. Get your teen in the habit of creating vocabulary cards. Give your teen a pack of index cards. Then have your teen:

- **Identify vocabulary words.** These may be on a list provided by the teacher or words in bold type in his textbook.
- **Color code the cards.** He can use different colored cards for each subject.
- **Write each word** on the front of a card and the definition on the back.
- **Review the cards** every day. He can do this on the way to school, before dinner, with friends or whenever he has a few free minutes.
- **Look at his vocabulary cards** before quizzes and tests. Knowing definitions can help with matching, multiple choice and other questions.

Instill a strong work ethic

Finishing homework on time is important for your teen's success in school, but make sure your teen isn't just rushing through assignments. Before tucking papers in her backpack, teach your teen to ask herself: Did I give this my best effort?

If the answer is *no*, encourage her to look over her work to see how she could improve it. Taking pride in schoolwork now will prepare your teen to do her best work and become a valued employee in the future.





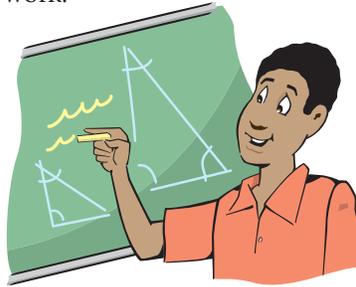
How can parents help when teens struggle with math?

Q: My son is so frustrated with his math class. He says he “just can’t do it”—and his grades seem to reflect that belief. What can I do to help? I don’t remember enough to tutor him!

A: Success in math requires patience and hard work.

Some teens find it easier to say they can’t do an assignment than to settle down to do the work or admit they are struggling. To help if math is a challenge for your teen:

- **Establish a daily time** for doing homework. It’s the best way to avoid nagging your teen. Have your teen do math homework first.
- **Turn off music** and the TV. Eliminate other distractions. Your teen needs to concentrate.
- **Review the directions** and sample problems. It may help if your teen becomes the “teacher” and explains the steps to you.
- **Consider a peer tutor.** Have your teen talk to his counselor or teacher about finding a classmate who is willing to give some extra help with math.
- **Find a study buddy.** Have your teen find a fellow student to contact when he’s stuck on a problem.



If your teen continues to struggle with math, inform his teacher. Don’t wait until he has failed a quiz or a test.



Is your teen ready for a part-time job?

She’s desperate to earn some spending money. You’re not so sure she’s ready for the responsibility of a part-time job. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen is ready for after-school work:

1. **Does your teen** get herself out of bed and to school on time almost every morning?
2. **Does your teen** usually make good decisions and choose good friends?
3. **Does your teen** usually take responsibility for her mistakes?
4. **Does your teen** take responsibility for getting her schoolwork done every day?
5. **Is your teen** usually able to follow through and finish big projects?

How did you do? Each yes answer means your teen is a little closer to accepting the responsibility of a part-time job. If you answered no several times, you may want to wait until she is a little more mature.

“A new position of responsibility will usually show a man to be a far stronger creature than was supposed.”

—William James

Income statistics show good attendance matters

Skipping school can lead to dropping out. And dropping out has life-long consequences. Share these statistics about average annual income based on education levels:

- **No high school diploma** = \$18,734.
- **High school diploma** = \$27,915
- **College degree** = \$51,206.

Source: R. Longley, “College Degree Nearly Doubles Annual Earnings: Census Bureau confirms earning power of higher education,” About.com, <http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/censusandstatistics/a/collegepays.htm>.

If you suspect your teen is being bullied, speak up

Bullying can take many different forms—teasing and put-downs, intimidation and threats, physical violence or extortion. And in today’s high-tech world, bullies can use text messaging, social networking websites, and email. If you suspect your teen is the victim of a bully, inform her guidance counselor. Together, we can help your teen.

Working out prevents your teen from stressing out

Stress can have a negative effect on school success—leading to teens feeling *more* stressed about doing poorly in school. But research shows that healthy exercise habits reduce stress. Exercise:

- **Helps** people feel happier and more energized.
- **Acts** like meditation.
- **Increases** self-confidence.
- **Improves** memory.



Source: “Exercise: Rev up your routine to reduce stress,” MayoClinic.com, www.mayoclinic.com/health/exercise-and-stress/SR00036.

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