

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



November 2011

Title I Cooperative

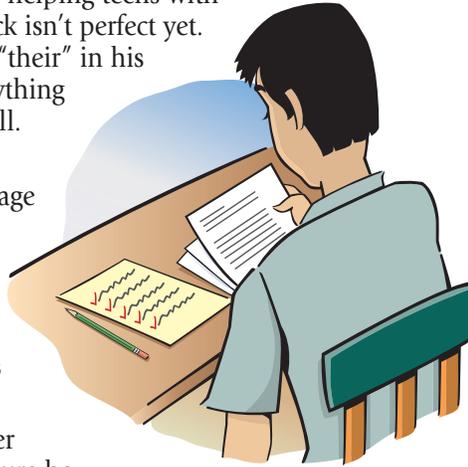
Educational Service Unit 10

## Slow down when proofreading

Computers have come a long way in helping teens with spelling and grammar, but spell check isn't perfect yet. If your teen types "there" instead of "their" in his essay, the computer won't notice anything is wrong—but your teen's teacher will.

To avoid careless errors and to become a better proofreader, encourage your teen to:

- **Allow plenty of time.** Some teens leave writing assignments until the last minute. Have your teen write a first draft several days before a paper is due.
- **Follow directions.** If his teacher expects a specified format, make sure he complies.
- **Take a break.** He may catch missing words or phrases when he takes a fresh look at his paper.
- **Read his composition aloud.** Sometimes the ear will catch what the eye skips over.
- **Create a checklist.** After he receives a graded paper, he should keep a list of his errors. He can use it when proofreading his next paper. Have him add to the list every time he gets a graded paper back.



Remember, it's okay for you to read your teen's paper and make helpful comments, but it's your teen's responsibility to do the actual writing and make the edits.

Source: "Proofreading," Virginia Tech Study Skills, [www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/proofing.html](http://www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/proofing.html).



## Better organization = better grades

Students who are organized are more prepared for class and get better grades. Encourage your teen to:

- **Use a daily planner.** Before leaving each class, she should write down exactly what she needs to have/do/study for the next time she has that class.
- **Create a to-do list** before starting homework. Encourage her to start with the most difficult assignments first and check off completed tasks.
- **Keep subjects separate.** Have your teen use a different folder for each class. (If possible, give each one its own color.) That way, her work will automatically be divided by subject.
- **Use an assignment calendar.** Give her a big calendar where she can list upcoming tests and projects. If an assignment is weeks away, she can jot down a reminder such as "Project due in one week!"

## Study shows lower stress leads to higher achievement

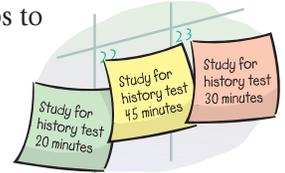
What happens at home can affect your teen's success in school. So try to keep the stress level in your teen's life pretty low. If arguments usually end in tears and yelling, try "taking 10" when you're upset. Get out and take a walk. Or simply say, "We need time to cool off. We'll talk later."

Source: M. Borba, "7 Simple & Science-Backed Ways to Boost School Success," [www.micheleborba.com/blog/2011/02/08/7-simple-science-backed-ways-to-boost-school-success/](http://www.micheleborba.com/blog/2011/02/08/7-simple-science-backed-ways-to-boost-school-success/).

## Test prep reduces anxiety

Does your teen have a big test coming up? Being prepared can calm her down. Share these tips to avoid cramming:

- **Learn** about the exam. What will be covered? Is it all multiple-choice? Will she need to write an essay?
- **Set** a schedule. Have her post her study schedule on a big calendar. Hang it over her desk so she can see it.
- **Study** in several short sessions. Take five- to 10-minute breaks in between subjects to help the information sink in.



## Stop teens' all-night texting

A growing number of teens admit to sending text messages when their parents think they're asleep. This can affect their attendance, grades and even their health. If you think nighttime texting is causing problems, take away your teen's phone at bedtime.



Source: B. Teitell, "Texting teenagers who stay 'on call' all night pay the price in lost sleep," Pew Internet, [www.pewinternet.org/Media-Mentions/2011/Connected-exhausted.aspx](http://www.pewinternet.org/Media-Mentions/2011/Connected-exhausted.aspx).



## How can parents control rebellious teenagers?

**Q:** My daughter is out of control. When she doesn't get her way, she throws a tantrum. She refuses to do anything I ask. She calls me names. And her teachers say she acts the same way at school. What can we do?

**A:** All teens go through periods of rebellion. But your daughter has moved beyond what's acceptable—at home and at school.

Dealing with her defiance will be tough, but deal with it you must. Otherwise, she'll never be able to hold a job or have healthy relationships with others. To get your daughter back on track:

- **Meet with her teachers** and counselors to form a plan for helping your daughter. Maintain regular contact through phone or email updates.
- **Tell her your basic expectations.** You might expect her to speak respectfully to others, for example.
- **Establish consequences** for inappropriate behavior such as loss of phone or TV privileges. If she drives, you could limit driving privileges.
- **Enforce a consequence** when she tests the limits. Remember, she needs a parent, not a friend. Stay calm. Don't let her drag you into a yelling match.
- **Establish routines.** Having a set time for doing chores and homework can eliminate daily battles.
- **Praise your daughter** when you notice that her behavior is improving.



## Are your teen's applications organized?

Managing college applications is a big job, but it's important to allow your senior to take on this responsibility. It's a step in learning what college will be like. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen is ready:

\_\_\_ **1. Has your teen narrowed** down his list to choose between five and 10 schools?

\_\_\_ **2. Has your teen set up** a master calendar with application deadlines and important test dates?

\_\_\_ **3. Has your teen asked** for financial aid applications from each school he is applying to?

\_\_\_ **4. Has your teen asked** for recommendations from his teachers and counselor?

\_\_\_ **5. Has your teen written—** and revised—a college essay?

**How did you do?** Each *yes* answer means your teen is well on his way to applying to college. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

“Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned.”

—Peter Marshall

## Help your teen think ahead

Teens' brains aren't fully developed until they reach their early 20s. Teens are still learning how to control their impulses—and they still need parents' guidance. To help your teen make good decisions, have him:

- **State** a problem in his own words.
- **Consider** all possible solutions before making a decision.
- **Evaluate** how his plan worked. What could he do differently next time?

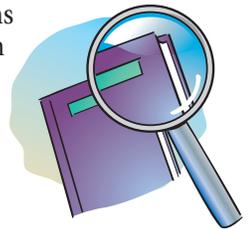
## Work on teens' work ethics

A “work ethic” is a set of values and beliefs and includes traits such as being reliable, working hard and having pride in your work. To instill a strong work ethic in your teen:

- **Model one.** Show your teen how to work, why work is important and that every job has a value. Share some of your own experiences to make the point that a job done well can have many benefits.
- **Give responsibilities.** Your teen should do her chores completely because that's what she was asked to do—not just to escape being yelled at for slacking.

## Take a look at textbooks

Research shows that teens do better in school when their parents take an active interest in their progress. How much do you know about the classes your teen is taking? Have your teen introduce you to one of his classes by giving you a tour of his textbook. Ask about charts, illustrations and graphs. Comment on photos. Ask what your teen has learned.



Source: E. Patrikakou, “Adolescence: Are Parents Relevant to Students' High School Achievement and Post-Secondary Attainment?” Harvard Family Research Project, <http://tinyurl.com/yfa7mwt>.

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