

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative

Educational Service Unit 10

## 'Academic reporters' get all the facts

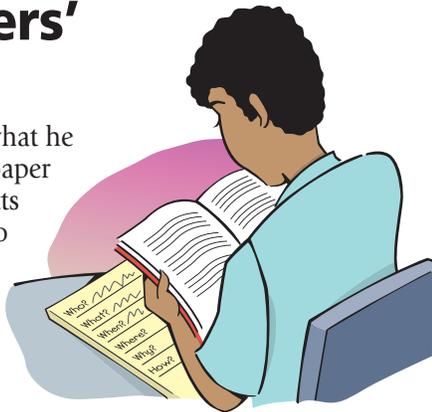
If your teen has trouble remembering what he has read, try a technique used by newspaper reporters. They're required to get the facts up front. Each news story is supposed to answer six questions (*who, what, when, where, why* and *how*) in the first two paragraphs.

Have your teen apply this strategy when he reads assignments for history or English class. Here's how it works. Before he reads, have him write the following questions on a sheet of paper. Then as he reads, have him write the answers. He should think about:

- 1. What?** What were the most important things that happened?
- 2. Who?** Who was there? Who were the most important characters?
- 3. When?** When did it happen? Were there any important reasons the event happened when it did (not earlier or later)?
- 4. Where?** Where did this event take place?
- 5. Why?** What were the causes for this event? Why is it important to learn about?
- 6. How?** How did it happen? How did it turn out?

Ask to see his notes when he has completed his assignment. Use them to talk about what he has read. Later he can use the notes to study for a chapter or unit exam.

Source: Jeanne Mach and others, *Effective Study Strategies for Every Classroom*, ISBN: 1-8893-3294-9, Boys Town Press.



## Connect classes & interests

When you talk with your teen about school, ask her to name something positive about what she's learning in each class. Then build on that interest. You might:

- **Watch a movie** related to it.
- **Visit a museum exhibit**—or check out a museum's website at home or at the library.

## Check cell phone use

Is your teen addicted to his cell phone? According to a recent study, when parents monitored cell phone use, teens were less likely to:

- **Regret** a text they sent.
- **Send** or receive sexual content.
- **Use** cell phones while driving.



To begin a discussion about responsible behavior, review school guidelines for cell phone use with your teen.

Source: "Teens, Cell Phones and Texting," Pew Research Center, <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1572/teens-cell-phones-text-messages?src=prc-latest&proj=peoplepress>.



## Saying *no* can sound less negative

Sometimes parents have to say *no* to requests. But this can set off those sensitive teens. Surrounding *no* with positive messages can help. Before you say *no*, let your teen know you understand her. Then explain why you're turning down her request. Follow up with an appealing alternate option.

Here are some examples:

- 1. Your teen asks to use the car.** You answer, "I know you love to drive to work. But I need

the car tonight for errands. I'll be happy to let you have it tomorrow night."

- 2. Your teen wants to go to a party.** "I know you're excited about the party at Anne's house. I have to say no because her parents aren't going to be home that night. You can invite a friend over for pizza instead if you'd like."

Source: Paul W. Swets, *The Art of Talking with Your Teenager*, ISBN: 1-5585-0478-8, Adams Media Corporation.

## Prepare for conferences

To make a parent-teacher conference a productive experience:

- **Talk to your teen.** Is there anything specific she would like you to discuss?
- **Bring a list of questions** you would like to ask and topics to cover.
- **Develop a plan** with the teacher. Explore ways you could help your teen improve at home.
- **Talk to your teen again.** Let her know what you and the teacher discussed.



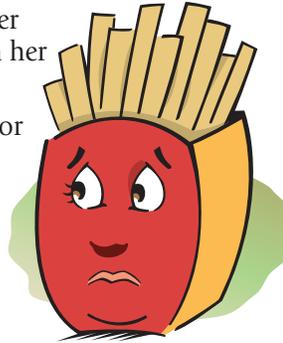


## How can parents encourage healthy habits in teens?

**Q:** My daughter hates to go to school. She's overweight and says kids make fun of her. Her grades are slipping and she doesn't want to do anything except watch TV in her room and eat. What can I do?

**A:** No one can lose the weight except your daughter. But she's lucky to have a parent who is so concerned about her emotional and physical health—and their effects on her learning. Here are some things you can do:

- **Make an appointment** with your family doctor to help your daughter plan a sensible weight loss program. Consider eliminating high-fat snacks from your whole family's diet.
- **Take the TV out of her room.** She'll be more likely to get active—and studies show her grades will also improve.
- **Encourage your daughter** to get some physical exercise. Suggest that she use a pedometer to see how far she walks in a day. She might also enjoy working out to exercise videos, like yoga or kickboxing.
- **Suggest that your daughter volunteer** in your community. As she learns she can make a difference, she'll also gain self-esteem.



## Is your teen getting enough sleep?

Most teens get less than seven hours each night—far less than the nine hours they need. That means they are likely to be tired both at home and at school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're doing all you can to help your teen get the sleep he needs to do well in school:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to stick to a regular bedtime?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you make sure** your teen gets exercise each day and doesn't drink too much caffeine?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you limit** your teen's late-night activities—especially on school nights?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you suggest** that your teen take a short nap in the afternoon to help him catch up on sleep?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you help** your teen with time management so he doesn't have to stay up late working on assignments?

**How did you do?** *Each yes means you are helping your teen get the rest he needs to do his best. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.*

“Sleep is the golden chain that ties our health and our bodies together.”

—Thomas Dekker

## Expect the best from teens

Research shows that your expectations can have a huge impact on your teen's academic achievement. One study found that when parents' expectations were clearly expressed, teens' own expectations begin to match them. You don't have to go out of your way—even saying, “That assignment looks tough, but I believe you can do it,” can inspire your teen.

Source: Evanthia N. Patrikakou, “Adolescence: Are Parents Relevant to Students' High School Achievement and Post-Secondary Attainment?” FINE Network at Harvard Family Research Project, [www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/adolescence.html](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/fine/resources/digest/adolescence.html).

## Share tips for test success

Prepare your teen for test success by sharing these three tried-and-true tips:

- 1. Read the directions carefully.** You'll avoid simple—but avoidable—mistakes.
- 2. Use time wisely.** Skim the test before answering any questions. Then budget your time accordingly.
- 3. Answer the easy questions first.** You'll be off to a good start and you may be reminded of facts for more difficult questions.

Source: Julia G. Thompson, *The First-Year Teacher's Survival Guide*, ISBN: 0-7879-9455-6, Jossey-Bass Publishers.

## Routines build responsibility

Your teen forgot her homework—again! Or she's missing her gym clothes ... or her science book. If this sounds like your teen, an evening routine can solve the problem. Expect her to put homework and other items for school in her backpack—and the backpack by the door—before going to bed each night.



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