

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

Tweak your family's back-to-school routine

It's a new school year—which means it's time to switch from that relaxed summer routine to the more hectic school routine. Your teen's schedule may be packed with school and other activities. But don't think that your teen doesn't want to spend time with you. Research shows that teens actually "respect, like and admire their parents and enjoy spending time with them."



Make the effort this school year to carve out more time with your teen. You can:

- **Plan family meals.** Plan and prepare a meal together. Talk about the foods you'd like to try. You'll get a great meal and a great conversation.
- **Use car time.** When driving to school, soccer practice or the mall, turn off the radio and have a chat with your teen.
- **Look for "teachable moments."** Talk about underage drinking when you see a story about a car crash caused by someone drinking and driving. Talk about violence, and better ways to solve problems, when you see a TV show that includes violence.

Studies show that teens who have positive relationships with their parents are more likely to do well in school.

Source: Kristen A. More and others, "Parent Teen Relationships: Far More Positive Than Not," Child Trends Research Brief, www.childtrends.org/files/parent_teenRB.pdf.



This school year, resolve to read more

Reading is a skill that improves with practice. But that doesn't mean reading has to be dull. Encourage your teen to read for pleasure. Students who read for pleasure show better reading comprehension skills and are able to read more quickly. They also do better in school.

To get your teen started, suggest that he:

- **Schedule** at least 20 minutes of reading time every day.
- **Read** mysteries, science fiction, action adventures, magazines and the newspaper.
- **Keep** a reading log.
- **Visit** the library. A librarian can suggest books on favorite topics.
- **Go** online. The American Library Association (www.ala.org/yalsa) posts "Teens' Top Ten" book lists.
- **Pick out** a book you can read together. When you finish, talk and celebrate during a special meal.

Source: Elizabeth Knowles and Martha Smith, *Reading Rules! Motivating Teens to Read*, ISBN: 1-5630-8883-5, Libraries Unlimited.

Teach teens persistence

The high school years can be challenging. At one time or another most students struggle with an assignment. Remind your teen that the key is to work hard and keep trying. Say, "You can figure it out. Don't give up!"

Source: Peter L. Benson and others, *What Teens Need to Succeed*, ISBN: 1-5754-2027-9, Free Spirit Publishing.

Share expectations for teens' homework time

Want your teen to have a great year? Expect your teen to:

- **Have a homework routine**—same time, same place—that is followed every day.
- **Avoid distractions.** No cell phone or TV during study time.

Compliment your teen's good work ethic!



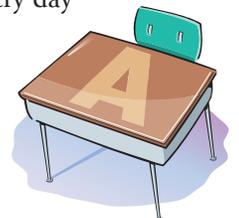
Source: "Top Ten Homework Tips for Parents," Public School Review, www.publicschoolreview.com/articles/68.

'Do I have to go to school?'

Sooner or later, your teen may ask, "Do I have to go to school today?"

Answer *yes!* Teens who miss school:

- **Earn lower grades.** Learning builds day by day—and every day counts.
- **Are more likely to use drugs or alcohol,** get in trouble with the law and get pregnant.
- **Develop bad habits.** Your teen will have to show up every day for a job.



Source: Kimberly L. Henry, "Who's Skipping School: Characteristics of Truants in 8th and 10th Grade," *Journal of School Health*, American School Health Association.



How can parents tame teens' technology use?

Q: My 16-year-old is permanently attached to his computer and his cell phone. He spends a lot of time on a social networking site. How can we make sure this isn't affecting his schoolwork?

A: Your parents probably complained about the phone growing out of your ear. Today's teens are just using new tools for the same purpose: staying in touch with friends.

Discuss your concerns with your teen. Be sure to:

- **Give him guidelines** for visiting social networking sites and using his cell phone. Share your expectations for completing homework.
- **Discuss texting.** Many parents think their teens are sleeping when they are actually sending text messages late into the night.
- **Discuss safety.** Say your teen may not ride in a car with a driver who is texting or talking on a cell phone.
- **Encourage your teen to live in the real world.** Instead of cyber communication, encourage face-to-face talk. Invite friends over for homework or just to hang out. (An added plus: you'll get to meet the kids he spends time with.)

If this continues to be a problem, remember, you are the adult and you are in charge. You can take away his cell phone and limit his computer time.



R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Tell teens what it means to you

When asked how parents can help teens at home, teachers often respond, "Teach teens to show respect." To instill this trait in your teen, talk about:

- **Respect.** What are words she would use to define respect? How does she show respect for her classmates?
- **Disrespect.** How do people show that they disrespect teens? How do teens show that they disrespect others?
- **Showing respect at school.** Your teen can show respect to the teacher in simple ways—following classroom rules and coming to class prepared and on time.

Source: Rick Wormeli, *Day One & Beyond*, ISBN: 1-5711-0355-4, Stenhouse Publishers.

Get involved this year!

Research shows that parent involvement is just as important during high school as it is during elementary school. So this September, make a "new school year's resolution" to increase your involvement. You might plan to attend one parent organization meeting each semester or ask how you can volunteer at home or at school. No matter what you choose to do, it *all* makes a big difference in your child's education!



Are you teaching organization skills?

There may be a few teens who are naturally organized. But most need help to learn how to get it together—so they get to school on time, with the books and homework they need. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen learn important organizational skills:

1. **Does your teen have** a planner that you review together nightly?
2. **Does your teen have** a place by the door for things that are going to school?
3. **Does your teen break** big projects into smaller parts and create deadlines for each of those smaller sections?
4. **Does your teen schedule** time for homework on the calendar along with her other commitments?
5. **Does your teen check** her planner again before bed so

she knows what she needs for the next day?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you're helping your teen develop organizational skills. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it's not all mixed up."

—A. A. Milne

Encourage everyday math

Remind your teen that math classes are important because math is necessary for success in a variety of careers. In addition, math skills are important for everyday life. They help people:

- **Keep** track of money.
- **Measure** ingredients for a recipe.
- **Evaluate** the price of a purchase.



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