

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Title I Cooperative  
Educational Service Unit 10

April 2009

## TESTING TIPS

### Suggest some studying strategies

Whether it's an Advanced Placement Test, a final exam or an important state test, April is a month when many teens begin preparing for big exams. To help, suggest that your teen:

- **Focus on weak areas.** No one is equally good at everything. So to make the most of her study time, have her look through old tests and homework assignments. Have her list the subjects or chapters where she needs the most work. That's where she should concentrate as she is reviewing.
- **Work with others.** Many teens find that forming a study group is a great way to review material. Members can quiz each other and can share questions that might be on the exam—but remind your teen (and her friends) to stay focused.
- **Use memorization strategies.** Help your teen find a more interesting way to keep the material in her brain. Have her write a song or poem to make the information stick.
- **Apply concepts.** Your teen will perform better on tests if she has actually used the skills in real-life situations.
- **Focus on vocabulary.** Just about every test has some questions about vocabulary. If her textbook has words in bold type, have her make a flash card for each word with the definition on the back.



## BUILDING CHARACTER

### Support your teen's individuality

Your teen is growing up—discovering who he is and what he believes in. Meanwhile, he feels pressure from peers. To help him strike a balance:

- **Empathize with your teen.** Explain that you understand how difficult it can be to break away from the group.
- **Discuss drugs and alcohol.** Impaired teens are more likely to follow the crowd. If your teen stays sober, it will be easier for him to stick to his values.
- **Give examples.** Discuss stories about teens in trouble. Review how your teen might handle situations.
- **Set limits.** Support your teen with appropriate guidelines. He can always use you as an excuse: "I can't skip curfew—my mom is waiting up. I'd get grounded!"

Source: Andrea Marks and Betty Rothbart, *Healthy Teens, Body and Soul*, ISBN: 0-7432-2561-9 (Fireside Publishing, a division of Simon & Schuster, [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)).

## DEALING WITH TOUGH ISSUES

### Help your teen end bullying

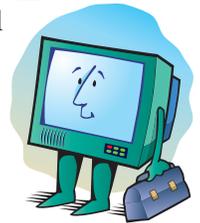
If you think your teen is a victim of bullying:

- **Get the facts.** Be sure you know the *real* story.
- **Send a clear message** that your teen does not have to just "grin and bear it."
- **Talk with teachers.** Is this affecting your teen's schoolwork?
- **Talk with a school counselor.** They are trained to help.

## SCREEN TIME

### Make TV work for you

By the time they graduate from high school, most teens will have spent 20,000 hours in front of the television. Too much TV time can cut into study time. So make sure TV time benefits your teen. Here's how:



- **Watch together.** You may get some insight into the role models that influence your teen.
- **Discuss what happened.** Was there a lot of unexpected violence? Did a character have to deal with a crisis? How would your teen have coped?
- **Discuss character traits.** Did characters in a show reflect your values?

Source: Sheila H. Troppe, "Television and Teens," Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, [www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/5/84.05.03.x.html](http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1984/5/84.05.03.x.html).

## IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

### Be firm about attendance

The alarm went off 10 minutes ago, but your teen still isn't out of bed. "I don't feel good," she says. This excuse has been around for as long as school itself. Unless she has a fever or can describe her symptoms exactly, send her to school.



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

### How should parents handle social networking sites?

**Q:** My 15-year-old has a page on one of the social networking sites. I checked it out and was surprised and sad to read what he said.

He talked about going to parties where alcohol was served, and described getting “wasted.” We have had a serious talk, and we are taking steps to address this issue. But some of his friends have the same thing on their home pages. Should I tell their parents? The school?

**A:** Social networking sites are a popular way for teens to communicate. They allow young people to share information about themselves quickly and easily. But, as with any online conversation, what is said may not always be the truth.

There can also be consequences. Employers and colleges regularly check to see what young people say about themselves. And once that information is posted, it can live forever. Even after your teen deletes the page, an older version may be stored on someone else’s computer.

Should you tell parents what you saw on their kids’ home pages? Absolutely. Parents need to work together to keep teens safe. And tell the school, too. Spring is a great time for an alcohol abuse awareness program.



## PARENT QUIZ

### Could your teen need extra help?

The end of the year is near—but it’s not too late for your teen to get extra help if she needs it. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen may be struggling in her classes:

- 1. Do you know** the warning signs of a struggling student? (A failing grade, several missed classes, etc.)
- 2. Have you worked** with your teen to figure out the cause of the problem? (Not doing homework, not listening in class.)
- 3. Have you talked** with your teen about why it’s a sign of strength and not of weakness to ask for help when she needs it?

- 4. Have you spoken** with your teen’s teacher and counselor about help available at the school?
  - 5. Have you looked** for outside help if the school cannot assist your teen? (Self-study materials, a tutor, etc.)
- How did you do?** Each yes answer means you’re helping your teen get back on the path to success. For each no answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

“No entertainment is so cheap as reading, nor any pleasure so lasting.”  
—Lady M. W. Montague

## AFTER SCHOOL

### Ask questions when your teen is hunting for a job

Many teens work while they’re in high school. If your teen wants to work, ask him these questions:

- **“Does** the job match your skills?”
- **“How** will you get there?”
- **“What** are the hours?”
- **“Will** it affect your schoolwork?”
- **“Is** the neighborhood safe?”
- **“Is** the pay fair?”

Source: “Balancing High School and Part-Time Work,” CollegeBoard.com, [www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/high-school/45266.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/high-school/45266.html).

## WHEN YOU NEED HELP

### Know signs of depression

Does your teen seem overwhelmed? She might be depressed. Signs include:

- **A drop** in grades.
- **Extreme** or sudden mood changes (like restlessness, grouchiness, sulkiness, etc.).
- **Hiding** out in her room.
- **Withdrawal** from activities.
- **Changes** in sleep patterns.
- **Significant** weight gain or loss.
- **Unwillingness** to cooperate in family projects.

Depression is not just a “phase.” Get help if you are concerned.

## DISCIPLINE

### Leave chores to chance

Here’s a way to spice up household chores. Cut out several strips of paper. On each one, write a job. When it’s time to get to work, have family members pick one without looking. They can trade jobs if they don’t like the result.



Source: Caryl Walter Krueger, *1001 Things to Do with Your Kids*, ISBN: 1-5786-6044-0 (Galahad Books, an imprint of Sterling Publishing, 1-800-367-9692, [www.sterlingpublishing.com](http://www.sterlingpublishing.com)).

## Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Managing Editor: Patricia Hodgdon.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editors: Erika Beasley & Rebecca Miyares.

Writers: Susan O’Brien & Pat Hodgdon. Editorial Assistant:

Pat Carter. Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1527-103x