

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

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HOMWORK

Keep homework on track in spring

As soon as the days become longer, students' attention spans become shorter. Kids of all ages are tempted to skip the studying to spend extra time outside. To make sure your teen is still finishing his homework:

- **Encourage it.** Create a climate for learning. Turn off the TV. Keep his study area free from clutter. Make sure his space is stocked with necessary supplies to avoid last-minute panic over a project.
- **Talk about it.** Ask questions about his assignments: Which one was the most interesting? Which one was the most difficult? This will remind your child that even if he doesn't *want* to complete his homework, you still think it's important that he does it—and he should think it's important, too.
- **Time it.** If your teen averaged three hours of homework per night during the winter, a new 15-minute homework average should make you a little suspicious. A comment like, "Your teachers sure let up on the homework suddenly," might be enough to fix the problem.
- **Combine it.** Suggest that your teen do his reading on the front steps or at a local park. That way, he can still enjoy the sun—*without* sacrificing valuable homework time.



MAKING TIME COUNT

Stay involved through the year's end

Summer vacation may be just around the corner, but your involvement during the final weeks of school is still vitally important. Remember to:

- **Keep track of important dates** and deadlines—write final exam dates, important activities and other school events on your family calendar.
- **Monitor homework.** It's great to get outdoors when spring arrives, but make sure your teen starts homework before he's too tired to concentrate.
- **Volunteer.** Ask how you can get involved—from your home or at the school. There are still many volunteer opportunities available.
- **Get your teen to school**—every day. Attendance is as important at the end of the year as it was at the beginning, so make sure your teen has a great attendance record.

HEALTHY HABITS

Sleep affects school success

Teens need 8 ½ to 9 hours of sleep to fully concentrate during the school day. In addition to affecting grades, lack of sleep can cause emotional disorders, poor athletic performance and driving accidents. Consider adjusting your teen's schedule if she's not getting the rest she needs.

Source: Mary L. Gavin, MD, "How Much Sleep Do I Need?" TeenHealth®, The Nemours Foundation, http://kidshealth.org/teen/food_fitness/wellbeing/how_much_sleep.html#.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Talk during other activities

Getting teens to talk can be a challenge. Conversation may be more likely to flow when you're doing an activity together. Your teen may feel more comfortable opening up while you're scrubbing opposite sides of the car than when you're staring at each other across the dinner table. And as a bonus, the conversation (and the extra set of hands) will make the job pass quickly.



BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Avoid enabling your teen's forgetful behavior

It seems your teen is always forgetting something! Before you dash to school one more time, consider whether you're enabling your teen's forgetfulness. If she knows she can always count on you, she'll never learn to take responsibility herself. Have your teen create a checklist to consult before walking out the door each morning.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents ensure prom is safe *and* fun for high schoolers?

Q: My daughter has been invited to the prom, and I want this to be an enjoyable night she'll never forget. But I've heard that many of the kids drink on prom night. How can I know she'll be safe?

A: For too many teens, the prom means more than a formal dress and a corsage—it means a night for underage drinking. And that can lead to serious problems.

It's not just the danger of a car crash, although that's serious enough. Teens often binge on alcohol, drinking five or more drinks in a row. That can lead to alcohol poisoning or even death.

You can't go to the prom with your daughter, but you can:

- **Talk about drinking before the prom.** Send a clear message about underage drinking—that it is not allowed in your family. Brainstorm some ways she can say *no* to drinking.
- **Find out who is driving.** If your teen is riding in a limo, make sure the driver (or limo service) actively discourages underage drinking. Offer to pick up your teen from *anywhere* if she feels uncomfortable—no questions asked.
- **Find out how the school is promoting** an alcohol-free prom night. Volunteer to help.
- **Stay up until your teen gets home.** Or ask her to wake you when she gets in.



PARENT QUIZ

Is your teen's study group working?

Teens who form study groups can master tough material, work together to review for big tests, and help keep each other on track. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen's study group spends its time wisely:

- ___ **1. Do the group** members seem to take school seriously?
- ___ **2. Is the group** made up of four or fewer members? It's easier to keep a smaller group on task than a larger one.
- ___ **3. Has the group** set rules—like how often they will meet?
- ___ **4. Is there** a clear leader of the group to keep members on task?
- ___ **5. Does everyone** work together to brainstorm questions the teacher might ask on a test?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means your teen's study group is *focused on studying*. For each *no* answer, share that idea with your teen.

“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.”

—Henry Ford

ENCOURAGING READING

Share books with teens

Celebrate National Library Week (April 11 – 17) by heading to the library with your teen. Most teens are ready to read adult authors. But they want to know what you like. If you're reading a best seller that you think your teen can handle, suggest that he pick it up, too.

Or read one of your teen's favorite books written for young adults and discuss it together. It can help you bring up difficult issues your teen may be facing.

DEVELOPING THINKING SKILLS

Emphasize thinking first

Taking a few minutes to think before diving into new material can help your high schooler improve her comprehension. Before she reads, tell her to think about:

- **The subject.** What does she already know about it?
- **The point.** Why is she learning this? What will she know or be able to do?

Source: Jean Ciburowski, *Textbooks and the Students Who Can't Read Them*, ISBN: 0-914797-57-3 (Brookline Books, www.brooklinebooks.com).

TESTING TIPS

Test out a test-day ritual

The brain loves using a ritual as a way to focus. Help your teen develop a ritual to perform before big tests. He

might want to take a deep breath, place two sharpened pencils on his desk and repeat a positive phrase.

Of course, a ritual won't help if your teen hasn't studied! But wearing those lucky socks or taking that deep breath can actually help him focus and do his best.

Source: Raleigh T. Philp, *Engaging Tweens and Teens: A Brain-Compatible Approach to Reaching Middle and High School Students*, ISBN: 1-8904-6049-4 (Corwin Press, www.corwinpress.com).



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