

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents handle adolescent mood swings?

Q: I asked my teen an innocent question. "Are you going to leave the milk on the counter?" She blew up and said I always yell at her. Then she stomped upstairs (without putting away the milk). Why does she seem to hear everything I say as a threat or an insult?

A: Research on the teen brain shows that teens often don't think about how others are feeling. The part of their brain that will let them do that simply hasn't developed enough yet. And they don't know how to put the brakes on their own feelings either. So what do you do when you get in a situation like this?

Instead of asking a question, state your request. "Mary, please put the milk back in the refrigerator." Don't let your tone of voice indicate that you're upset.

Your daughter may not be able to control her feelings, but you *can* expect her to control her behavior. Let her know what behavior you won't accept. Say, "It's okay if you're upset, but it is not okay to yell." As always, if you remain calm, your teen is more likely to keep her temper in check.



ENCOURAGING WRITING

Smooth edges with a rough draft

Your teen probably knows he should write rough drafts. But does he know how? These ideas will help:

- **Start early.** When he plans to write a paper, have him include extra time for editing.
- **Get specific.** Once he has collected all of his information, have him make an outline or diagram.
- **Brainstorm.** Have him start putting ideas—good and bad—on paper. He shouldn't worry about spelling, grammar or anything else.
- **Write a draft.** Have him pick the best thoughts and elaborate on them. After finishing a first version, he should put it away for a while before rereading it. (This makes it easier to spot mistakes.)
- **Revisit the draft.** Do his ideas flow logically? Are sentences too short or too long? Does the conclusion provide a good summary?
- **Proofread the paper.** Have him check his spelling, punctuation and grammar.

IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

Stress at home affects school performance

A recent study found that high levels of stress at home can affect a teen's performance in school. Students under stress were more likely to be absent and do poorly in class. If you and your teen are coping with problems at home, contact a guidance counselor. They're trained to help families and ready to provide support.

Source: Jennifer Warner, "Teen Stress at Home Lingers in School," MedicineNet.com, www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=89546.

WORKING WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Send a note of appreciation

Teachers usually hear from parents only when teens are having problems. Is your teen doing well? Send a written note of thanks to a teacher who has made a difference. Mention a specific lesson or project that captured your teen's interest.



Source: Project Appleseed, "The Parent Involvement Report Card," Project Appleseed.org, www.projectappleseed.org/reportcard.html.

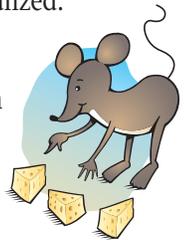
TESTING TIPS

Master multiple-choice tests

Taking a multiple-choice test can be much easier when kids know how to make educated guesses. Your teen should only guess if wrong answers are not penalized.

Share these tips:

- **Read** directions carefully. Can you choose more than one answer?
- **Think** about the answer before looking at choices.
- **If two** answers are similar except for one or two words, one is likely to be correct.
- **Make** sure that answer sheet marks match test questions.



ENCOURAGING READING

Reinforce common literary terms

High school English teachers don't just ask students to read stories and books. They also expect students to learn literary techniques used by authors. These techniques may show up on an English class exam:

- **Allusion.** The author refers to events from history or another work of literature in his own story.
- **Conflict.** The story revolves around a struggle. There are three kinds of conflict:
 - Man vs. man.
 - Man vs. nature.
 - Man vs. self.
- **Dialogue.** The characters engage in conversation. Dialogue is usually indicated by placing the text inside quotation marks.
- **Foreshadowing.** Something in the story gives a hint or clue about a future event in the story.
- **Irony.** Irony is saying one thing but meaning the opposite. Or, a story can have one expected outcome and the opposite of what is expected happens.
- **Mood.** This is the "feeling" of the story. A mood might be humorous, serious or eerie.
- **Symbol.** Is an object in the story used to represent something else? For example, does a *dove* indicate *hope*?



Does your teen know other terms? Ask him to show you examples from the reading assignments he is doing for class.

Source: The Staff of the Princeton Review, *Know It All! Grades 9-12 Reading*, ISBN: 0-375-76374-0 (Random House, Inc., 1-800-733-3000, www.randomhouse.com/princetonreview).

PARENT QUIZ

How close is your relationship?

Studies show that teens who remain close to their parents are happier and healthier than teens who don't. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're staying connected with your teenager:

- ___ **1. Do you have** regular one-on-one time with your teen?
- ___ **2. Do you try** to do things your teen likes?
- ___ **3. Do you try** to spend more time with and less money on your teen?
- ___ **4. Do you volunteer** to drive your teen and her friends places or act as a chaperone?

___ **5. Do you listen** to your teen's music?

How did you do? Each yes answer is a way to get closer to your teen. For each no answer, try that suggestion in the quiz.

"Try not to become a man of success, but rather try to become a man of value."

—Albert Einstein

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Deal with irresponsibility

The trash wasn't taken out. Your teen forgot her lunch—again. She left her clothes on the bedroom floor. Want to promote more responsible behavior? Here's how:

- **Stop "rescuing" your teen.** She will never learn to be responsible if she knows you'll always bail her out.
- **Ask "if-then" questions.** "If you do that now, what will happen tomorrow? Next week?" Teach your teen this basic rule: *Don't do anything you'll regret later.*
- **Don't accept excuses.** When she starts to make one, just repeat, "That's an excuse. It won't work."

Source: Michele Borba, *Don't Give Me That Attitude*, ISBN: 0-787-97333-5 (Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1-800-956-7739 www.josseybass.com).

TALKING AND LISTENING

Stay in the moment

You and your teen are shopping at the mall. He's enjoying being with you when suddenly you decide to grill him about his math grade. Sometimes it's better to just enjoy each other's company. Choose another time and place for a serious talk.

Source: Linda Sonna, *The Everything Parenting a Teenager Book: A survival guide for parents!* ISBN: 1-59337-035-0 (Adams Media, an F+W Publications Company, 1-800-872-5627, www.adamsmedia.com).

STUDY SKILLS

Studying in a group can benefit your teen

A study group may help your teen understand homework and prepare for tests. It can allow your teen to share her strengths and overcome her weaknesses. It is also good practice for adulthood, when she may have to work with others on a project at work. As the group gets started, have members set some rules for keeping the focus on schoolwork.



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