

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

May 2009

ENCOURAGING READING

Keep your teen reading during summer months

Even though your teen might see “summer vacation” as time to hang out with friends and forget about school, it’s important that he keep reading during the summer. Summer reading can improve his reading speed and comprehension. It also helps with critical thinking skills. And if your teen reads all summer long, it will be a lot easier for him to readjust to school in the fall. Encourage your teen to:



- **Start a book club.** Offer to provide lemonade and snacks. Suggest a weekly discussion of books on the summer reading list.
- **Consider graphic novels,** audio books or magazines. A different format may make reading seem more enjoyable.
- **Take a class.** Your teen can learn a new skill or more about a subject that interests him.
- **Visit the local library.** Many public libraries have summer reading programs aimed directly at teens.
- **Read a book then rent the movie.** Discuss the differences between the two. Ask your teen which one he liked better.
- **Bring a book to work.** If your teen is working a summer job, he can spend his breaks reading. He may even find that he wants to keep reading when he gets home!

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Set the stage for responsible behavior

Your teen hasn’t done her English paper. Will you let her stay home to finish it? Decisions like this are tough for some parents. These tips can help:

- **Give as much responsibility** as possible. Balance the need to protect her with the need to encourage independence.
- **Help your teen consider** consequences. Encourage her to think, “What might happen if I do this? Which action will have the best results?”
- **Make a plan.** Help your teen design routines that work for her, such as studying after dinner.
- **Let experience be a teacher.** This won’t happen if you always bail out your teen. If a paper isn’t completed on time, the natural outcome (even if it’s an F) will teach important lessons.

NEXT STEPS

Help with résumé writing

Whether she’s looking for a summer job or planning for full-time employment, your teen will need to prepare a résumé. Ask your librarian to recommend books that can give your teen guidance. Or suggest that she look for résumé-writing tips online. She may also find that your computer word-processing program has a résumé template.

Source: “Developing Your Resume,” Adventures in Education, www.adventuresineducation.org/HighSchool/Jobs/Resumes/index.cfm.

MOTIVATING YOUR TEEN

Link academic skills to work-place experiences

Some teens don’t see the link between what they’re doing in school and what they’ll do later in life. An internship or job shadowing can make the connection clear. Seeing academic skills used in the workplace can be a great motivator for your teen.

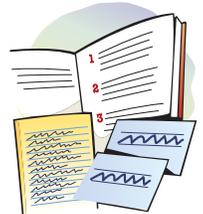


Source: Brian Jones, “Navigating the Career Pathway,” *OurChildren* (National PTA, 1-800-307-4782, www.pta.org).

TESTING TIPS

Encourage your teen to get organized for finals

Final exams always sneak up on students. Make sure your teen knows what each exam will cover. Suggest that she use chapter tests, homework papers and class notes to review. Have her make flash cards for vocabulary words. Starting to study at least 10 days before the test will also keep her stress level down.



Source: “How to Study for a Math Final Exam,” Coolmath.com, www.coolmath.com/finaltip.htm.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What are good summer activities for younger teens?

Q: My daughter is just finishing ninth grade. She's too young for a job, and I can't afford to send her to camp all summer. She wants to stay home and "hang out" with her friends. Is she old enough for me to leave her unsupervised all summer? What else could I find for her to do?

A: Too old for day care, too young for a driver's license. Your daughter is at that "in-between" age. You're right to worry about what she'd do at home alone all summer. She might be tempted to experiment with drugs and alcohol. And she would probably watch too much TV.

Check with your local library. They may have a list of programs in your community for young teens. Or check with your teen's guidance counselor. Could your teen take a summer school class? Summer school isn't just for students who fail.

Volunteering is another good way for teens to spend time. Could she volunteer as a helper in a program for younger children? She'll gain maturity and responsibility—and you'll know where she is all day!

The key is to involve her in activities with a purpose—especially if they are activities that involve learning.



PARENT QUIZ

Will your teen's summer be productive?

Help your teen make plans for summer—it's a great way to stay involved with his life. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if your teen will make the most of the summer months:

- ___ **1. Does your teen plan** to work, volunteer or take a class this summer?
- ___ **2. Do you and your teen have** a plan for getting regular exercise?
- ___ **3. Does your teen have** a reading list for next year's classes? Will you make sure he reads one or two books on the list?
- ___ **4. Have you set aside** some one-on-one time to spend with your teen?
- ___ **5. Does your family have** plans to volunteer together?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means your teen's summer will be *happy, healthy and productive*. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"Learn everything you can, from anyone you can ... you will be grateful you did."

—Sarah Caldwell

Use routines this summer

Some parents relax their rules during the summer break, but it's important to maintain some routines all year long. Do:

- **Enforce a curfew.** Expect your teen to be home at a designated time.
- **Monitor screen time.** Limit TV, video game and computer time.
- **Assign regular chores.** Expect him to contribute to the family.
- **Know where your teen is**—at all times. Expect him to call you if he changes his plans.

Source: "School's Out," Parents—The Anti-Drug, www.theantidrug.com/SchoolsOut/tips.asp.

PEER PRESSURE

Parent involvement is key

Teens place a high value on friendships. So invite your teen's friends to your home. Include them in a family activity. Talk with them. Meet their parents. It's important to know the friends who are influencing your child. But remember: According to research, parents remain a primary and vital influence during the teen years.

Source: Meg Gores, "Who is more important to teens—parents or peers?" University of Wisconsin Extension, www.uwex.edu/news/2008/9/who-is-more-important-to-teens-parents-or-peers.

YOUR TEEN AND YOU

Share letters with your teen

Sometimes the best way to talk to your teen is to write to her. Writing gives you time to find just the right words. It gives your teen time to think about what you've said. This may result in:

- **Fewer arguments.**
- **A better chance** of being "heard."
- **Opportunities** for your teen to respond thoughtfully in writing.



Source: Michael Riera, *Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teenagers*, ISBN: 1-5876-1224-0 (Celestial Arts, a division of Ten Speed Press, 510-559-1629, www.tenspeed.com).

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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 • ISSN 1527-103x