

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Educational Talent Search
Eastern New Mexico University

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HOMWORK

Teach your teen to prioritize

Your teen feels overwhelmed. She has a history quiz tomorrow. She has algebra problems to solve. And she has to write a composition for English. Where should she start?

Prioritizing homework can help your teen. If she puts off a dreaded task, it will hang over her head during her whole study hour. To avoid doing it, she may drag out the time she spends on other assignments. And when she finally gets to the one she doesn't like, she'll be tired and less focused.

Have her begin with her least favorite subject. Not only will she get the worst out of the way, she'll also learn an important lesson about taking responsibility.

Getting the tough task out of the way will help her feel great. And everything else she works on will seem easy.

But it's also important to weigh her priorities. If her English composition is worth 50% of her grade but her history quiz is only worth 10%, she may want to tackle the composition while she's fresh—even if English is her favorite subject.

So each day, encourage your teen to prioritize her assignments before starting. She'll find homework time less stressful and more productive.

Source: Ronald W. Fry, *Get Organized*, ISBN: 1-564-14461-5 (Career Press, www.careerpress.com).



SPENDING TIME WITH TEENS

Plan one-on-one activities with teens

It doesn't matter how old your teen is. He still wants your complete, undivided attention sometimes. Since most parents have schedules that can make this difficult, it's important to set aside alone time just for you and your teen.

At least once a week, do something for the two of you. Go grocery shopping and then cook dinner together. Take a walk or bike ride.

Check out a community event, such as a free concert or lecture. Head to a museum.

You don't need an agenda for these times. Just let your teen talk about whatever he wants. Slowly, you may find he opens up to you more. Teens usually feel more comfortable speaking with parents in private, without brothers and sisters around.

Source: Tom McMahon, *Teen Tips*, ISBN: 0-7434-7436-8 (Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, www.simonandschuster.com).

YOUR TEEN AND YOU

Public affection may embarrass your teen

Does your teen roll his eyes when you hug him or say, "I love you," in public? That's normal. But don't stop expressing yourself. Find new ways to show affection, such as giving him the thumbs-up sign or a smile and a wink.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Ask about completed work

The big project your teen has been working on is finished! But before your teen turns it in, ask these questions:

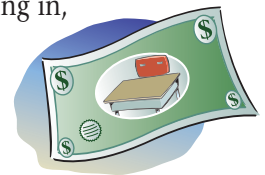
- **Did you follow** the teacher's directions exactly?
- **Can you honestly** say this is your own work?
- **Did you proofread** it for spelling errors?
- **Did you use** the required format for listing sources?
- **Are you satisfied** with what you are turning in?



IMPORTANCE OF ATTENDANCE

How much is your teen's daily attendance worth?

Regular school attendance is important. But some teens find sleeping in, hanging out with friends or watching TV more attractive. The next time your teen wants to skip a day, ask, "Would you go to school if you were paid \$300,000?" That's the difference in lifetime salary between a dropout and a high school graduate.



Source: Gary Fields, "The High School Dropouts Economic Ripple Effect," *The Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122455013168452477.html>.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can cheating be prevented?

Q: I overheard my son and a few of his friends planning to cheat on a big test. I'm afraid if I tell the school all my son's friends will turn on him. What should I do?

A: Tell your son the truth: You overheard the plan and you're concerned. Ask him about the consequences the school sets for cheating. Talk about your family's views on cheating. Discuss why cheating is wrong and what he misses out on by cheating instead of doing his own work.

Then ask him why he feels he needs to cheat. If he says:

- **He doesn't understand the content**, tell him you will help him talk with his teacher about getting extra help.
- **He doesn't have enough time to study**, go over his schedule with him. What activities could he eliminate? Does he have a job that is cutting into his study time?
- **He doesn't want to let his friends down**, then talk about ways he can cope with peer pressure.

If your son won't talk with you about this, contact his school counselor. If you find out your son *did* cheat, contact his teacher.

Some kids think parents value good grades at any price. Be sure your son knows that his honesty and integrity matter *much* more than a high grade on one exam.



PARENT QUIZ

Is your teen ready to apply to colleges?

Applying for college is stressful. But it's an important way for teens to take responsibility for the future. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're helping your teen get prepared to tackle those applications without taking over:

- ___ **1. Have you helped** your teen set up a filing system for applications? Does she know what she needs to do to complete each one?
- ___ **2. Have you talked** about what you will do to help? (You'll be there to help answer financial questions, but you won't write her essay.)
- ___ **3. Has your teen created** a schedule that gives her time to write and revise?
- ___ **4. Has your teen spoken** with her counselor about schools that might be right for her?

- ___ **5. Is your teen scheduled** to take the SAT or ACT?
How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you're striking the right balance. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"We are made wise not by the recollection of our past, but by the responsibility for our future."
—George Bernard Shaw

Get to know other parents

Meeting your teen's teachers is important. But getting to know other parents is important, too. Joining the school parent-teacher organization or volunteering to help are great ways to make connections. Talk about problems you share and ways you can work together to help students and the school.

DISCIPLINE

Adjust your teen's attitude

During adolescence it's natural for teens to challenge their parents. And it's not uncommon for teens to "have an attitude." Some parents say they just don't recognize their child anymore.

If that describes your situation, it may help if you:

- **Establish** specific rules and consequences.
- **Notice** when your teen does something well. Say thank you when she's helpful.
- **Maintain** regular routines. Having a set time for homework, chores and meals can cut down on nagging.

REINFORCING LEARNING

Promote interest in science

Does your teen complain that science is "boring"? Remind him that without it, he could never wear his favorite jeans, eat his favorite breakfast cereal, and certainly not watch his favorite show or send emails to his friends. To spark your child's interest in science:

- **Talk to his teacher.** Ask if there are any simple experiments he can do at home to help him understand the current lesson.
- **Check out a local museum,** planetarium or university for an exhibit that may relate to what he's learning at school.



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