

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Reading for pleasure builds skills that help when reading to learn

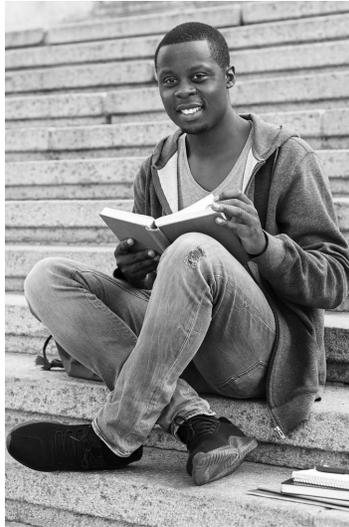
Your high school student is expected to read for most of his classes. So why is it important for him to make time outside of school for pleasure reading?

When teens read for fun, they don't have to worry about memorizing details for an upcoming test. And because they enjoy what they are reading, they are likely to read faster.

Teens who are able to read quickly and fluently also understand more of what they read. Their vocabularies grow and they acquire background knowledge that provides context for future reading. All these benefits lead to success in school-related reading and on standardized tests.

To help your teen find pleasure in reading:

- **Show enthusiasm for it.** Choose a book or magazine over TV. When you read something you enjoy, share it.
- **Ask him to give reading the same time** he'd give a movie. It's hard to get into a book by just reading for a few minutes from time to time.
- **Listen to audiobooks.** Books that look challenging can come to life when they are read aloud. Play audiobooks in the car, or when relaxing.
- **Remind him that he doesn't have to finish** every book. If it is too boring or difficult, encourage him to try another.



Discuss your teen's online reputation

Social media has become a place where teens put all aspects of their lives on display. But many teens don't realize that poor choices online can get them in trouble or hurt their chances for the college or job they really want.

Students have the right to free speech. But even if something is *allowed* online, it doesn't mean your teen *should* do it. Colleges and employers check applicants' social media.

Urge your teen to:

- **Check her privacy settings.** She should make sure that only her friends can see her posts—even past posts.
- **Refuse to share passwords.** Her friends should not be able to post on her accounts.
- **Delete inappropriate posts.**
- **Create a positive reputation** by sharing articles, posts and photos about issues that matter to her.
- **Think** before she posts.

Source: T. Thiefels, "What Every Teen Needs to Know About Their Digital Footprint," Net Nanny, niswc.com/keepitclean.

Give success its moment

Students need time to enjoy their successes. So if you are tempted to talk about the next big test when your teen brings home an improved grade, wait. Help him savor his achievement. "You got your highest score yet! Let's celebrate with a pizza."



Take a stand against hazing

Hazing—asking someone to participate in embarrassing, dangerous or illegal activities in order to be accepted into a group—affects 1.5 million high school students each year. To help prevent hazing:

- **Talk with your teen** about how she should expect to be treated. No one should have to be embarrassed or hurt to join a group.
- **Share the facts.** Hazing is against school policy and, in most states, it is against the law.
- **Keep your ears open.** If you are aware of an incident of hazing, report it to the school immediately.

Source: *Hazing Prevention Starts Now: Engaging Staff, Students and Parents in Promoting a Positive School Culture*, The Parent Institute.

Get playful to reduce stress

When stress strikes, help your teen cope by including fun in his day. Encourage him to:

- **Incorporate play into study time.** He could write a rap about his chemistry topic or act out a scene from the history he's learning.
- **Get creative.** The act of making something can help your teen see things in a new way. He could paint a picture or design a city park.



Source: Z. Stavelly, "How to Bring Playfulness to High School Students," Mind/Shift.



Q&A My teen worries about everything. What can I do?

Q: Anxiety is a problem for my daughter. On tests, she's always so uptight about failing that she does worse than she would if she could relax. During group projects, she's so worried about being liked that she does the work of four people. How can I help her give herself a break?

A: Your daughter is not alone. Anxiety is one of the top mental health issues among teens, and it's on the rise. But it sounds like worry is causing your teen to make her school life harder than it has to be.

Here are some ways to help:

- **Provide perspective.** Not everything has to be perfect. Talk with your daughter about times when "good enough" is fine.
- **Suggest study structure.** Encourage your teen to start studying for tests several days in advance and to take a break after every 30 minutes of studying. Remind her that getting a good night's sleep will lead to better results than all-night cramming. Then enforce a regular bedtime.
- **Give your teen an "out."** To help her avoid taking on too much responsibility for group projects, agree that she can say "Sorry, I can't do that because my mom says I have to help her this weekend."
- **Closely monitor** your daughter's behavior. Anxious teens sometimes self-medicate with alcohol or drugs. Seek professional help if needed.



Parent Quiz

Are you teaching time management?

In order to meet responsibilities each day and still get enough sleep at night, students must manage their time wisely. Are you building your teen's time management skills? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you talk** with your teen about setting priorities? When he can't do everything, he can do what's most important.
- ___ **2. Do you show** your teen how to break down big projects into smaller pieces?
- ___ **3. Do you help** your teen make a schedule for each week?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your teen to set short term goals and reward himself for meeting them?
- ___ **5. Do you set** an example by managing your time wisely?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen make the most of his time. For each no, try that idea.

"This time, like all times, is a very good one, if we but know what to do with it."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Discourage cheating for any reason

Students cheat for lots of reasons, even when they know it's wrong: they feel under pressure to do well; they don't see value in the material they're supposed to learn; or they think everyone else is cheating so they need to, too. Let your teen know that:

- **You value learning** and honesty more than grades.
- **Cheating hurts her.** She may avoid some work, but she's cheating herself of her education.
- **Cheating is never OK**—it is stealing someone else's work and lying about it.

Source: A. Simmons, "Why Students Cheat—and What to Do About It," Edutopia, niswc.com/cheating.

Jobs let teens earn & learn

An after-school job can be a great way for your teen to pick up workplace skills that will pay off in school and in any career. These include independence, respect for others, time and money management, and self-discipline. Just set limits on work hours and remind your teen that school is his top priority.



To get through, stop yelling

If there's one way to guarantee that your teen won't listen to you, it's to yell at her. What's more, studies show that harsh verbal discipline causes behavioral problems and increases the risk of depression and academic troubles. When discipline is called for:

- **Take time**, if necessary, to manage your emotions and respond calmly.
- **Make it clear** who owns the problem. Ask your teen how she plans to deal with the situation *she* created.

Source: Society for Research in Child Development, "Harsh parenting predicts low educational attainment through increasing peer problems," ScienceDaily, niswc.com/harsh.

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