

High School

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Relating facts to something meaningful improves recall

Brain research sheds light on how memory works. And that can make test time a little easier for your teen.

When it comes to studying, some methods work better than others. Memorization is a case in point. Teens often memorize by repeating something over and over. But one brain study says there's a better way to retain information.

Repetition can help with short-term memory. But long-term memory is what your teen needs to call up a fact on a test. Researchers found that the best way to store information long term is to relate it to other facts already stored in the brain.

To make new material more memorable, encourage your teen to:

- **Make a mental picture.** The Spanish word for *narrow* is *estrecho*. Think of

the word stretched out until it is very thin. The sillier the picture, the easier it may be for your teen to remember.

- **Link facts to prior knowledge.** Which spelling (*stationary* or *stationery*) means paper? "*Stationery* uses envelopes."
- **Use rhymes.** "Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred ninety-two" illustrates the power of a rhyme.
- **Create a sentence.** "I shouldn't battle again." The number of letters in each word correlates to the year the Civil War ended: 1865.

Spending time creating these memory links will help your teen study smarter and remember more.

Source: "Long-Term Memories Made with Meaningful Information," Science Daily.

Listen to your teen's ideas and opinions



"Could you please hear me out?" You've probably asked that question yourself in a dis-

cussion at work or with a family member. Even if you don't get your way, you want to know your point of view is being considered.

It should come as no surprise that teens feel the same way. Giving them a chance to express their opinions makes them happier, more engaged and more confident.

When your teen has something to say, take time to listen carefully. And when you hear a valid point, seriously consider it. For example, your teen might have a reasonable idea about switching up chores, or a compelling argument for staying up a bit later on Friday night.

You may not always agree with your teen, but by listening, you are demonstrating respect—and instilling the confidence your teen will need to speak up and contribute in school and in life.

Source: K.N. Marbell-Pierre and others, "Parental Autonomy Support in Two Cultures: The Moderating Effects of Adolescents' Self-Construals," *Child Development*.

Increasing play reduces your high schooler's level of stress



If you think you're under stress, talk to your teen. Studies show that today's teens may be even more stressed than adults—and that can affect their sleep, grades and health.

One effective way to help manage stress is to encourage your teen to build in some time for fun and relaxation. Here are four ideas:

1. **Make study time playful.** Ask your teen to act out a scene from a reading assignment, or create a rap about a chemistry concept. Play can boost brain function. So, teens who learn through fun are more likely to remember what they study!
2. **Create art.** The act of making something beautiful can help your teen see things in a new

way. Suggest painting a picture, writing a short story or filming a video.

3. **Play family games.** Find a board game or video game your teen loves and carve out time each week to play as a family.
4. **Explore.** Teens are naturally curious. So, encourage your teen to be adventurous. Suggest going on a hike with a friend or checking out a virtual college tour.

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

"It's not the load that breaks you down, it's the way you carry it."

—Lou Holtz

Encourage your teen to use a variety of resources for research



Knowing how to research is a must for high school students. At this point in school, students need more than answers. They need to know *how to find* the answers.

The internet and the library are great places to start. But your teen should consider going beyond these resources for major projects. Exploring additional types of resources will build interviewing skills, problem-solving skills and creative thinking skills.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Read published articles** on the topic. Sources of information are often named in the articles. Your teen might even call a reporter. Many are happy to share information and contacts with students.
- **Make phone calls** or send emails to experts in the field. To find experts, your teen can look online or call the public affairs offices of universities and businesses.
- **Conduct a short survey.** Your teen could ask people a series of questions about a certain topic and include the findings in the paper.
- **Talk with teachers** and other school staff, such as the librarian. This is a smart thing to do once your teen has already collected some materials. Then, your student could ask for suggestions on books, articles and other resources that offer a different point of view.

Are you helping your teen face school challenges?



About this time of the school year, some teens find themselves having difficulty in one class—or in several. Answer *yes*

or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are doing all you can to help if your teen is struggling:

- ___ 1. **Have you talked** with your teen about progress in classes and listened to any concerns?
- ___ 2. **Have you encouraged** your teen to talk to teachers about getting extra help before or after class?
- ___ 3. **Have you contacted** teachers to develop a plan to get your teen back on track?
- ___ 4. **Are you working** to get your teen study support through a tutor or a school-recommended program?
- ___ 5. **Have you helped** your teen develop study skills—sticking to a regular study time, establishing daily and long-term study goals, taking effective notes?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are doing what it takes to get your struggling teen back on track. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea.

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Self-respect helps high school students learn to respect others



Self-respect is essential for high schoolers. Teens with self-respect believe they are worthy of being treated fairly and kindly.

And they know it would be out of character for them to treat others differently.

To foster a sense of self-respect:

- **Help your teen resist** negative peer pressure. Talk about ways to avoid situations your teen knows will lead to trouble.
- **Keep a positive attitude.** Everyone experiences bumps in the road. These are temporary. Encourage your teen to make a fresh start after a setback.
- **Point out your teen's strengths** and explain that people have different

strengths and weaknesses.

This awareness can help your teen control feelings of jealousy. The ability to be happy for others, rather than being envious, is an important part of self-respect.

- **Take a firm stance** against substance abuse. Tell your teen that self-respect includes respect for personal safety and health.
- **Model self-respect.** Remember to speak positively about yourself. Be honest and follow-through with commitments. Forgive yourself when you make mistakes. Take good care of your health and your relationships.

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Fireside.

Support your teen's growing ability to think and analyze



As students get older, they learn to think in more complex ways. High school students have begun to develop:

- **Advanced reasoning skills.** They are able to think about multiple possibilities and hypothetical situations.
- **Abstract thinking skills.** They can think about intangible concepts, such as *integrity*.
- **The ability to think about thinking.** This allows students to consider *how* they are processing what they are learning and feeling.

Changes in thought processes are often displayed in typical teen behavior, such as the belief that “no one” understands them. Teens also tend to become more concerned with the world around them. They

may start supporting a cause, or begin noticing differences between adults' words and actions.

To support your teen's advancing thinking skills:

- **Listen to concerns.** Try not to be offended if your teen says you don't understand. Instead, enlist the help of an older sibling or family friend, and suggest that your teen turn to that person for advice.
- **Listen to ideas.** Encourage your teen to offer opinions on family rules and consequences.
- **Discuss your teen's views** of the world—and talk about your own. Ask about political ideas and personal values. Withhold any judgment.
- **Encourage involvement** in causes your teen feels strongly about.

Q: My high schooler tends to put things off. If there is a big paper due, my teen waits until the night before—sometimes, until very late on the night before. How can I help my teen break the procrastination habit before it starts to affect grades?

Questions & Answers

A: Most teens put things off at one time or another. But some teens are regular procrastinators. In addition to driving their families crazy, these teens end up creating a lot of unnecessary stress—and they usually don't perform as well academically as they could.

To put an end to the procrastination habit:

- **Talk about it.** Ask your teen, “Why do you think you put things off? Are you afraid of failing? Do you like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute? Or, are you just unmotivated?” Whatever the cause, let your teen know that this habit needs to change.
- **Demonstrate how to divide** large projects into smaller pieces and set deadlines for each piece. After getting started on a project, your teen may realize that it is easier to keep working. After finishing each task, your teen should do something enjoyable as a reward.
- **Encourage positive self-talk.** Saying things like, “There's no time like the present” can be very motivating!
- **Help your teen see assignments** in terms of long-term goals. Learning how to manage time will help your student be successful in high school and beyond.

It Matters: Reading Skills

Reading for enjoyment has many benefits



High school students do a lot of school-related reading. So why is it important for them to make time for pleasure

reading, too?

When teens read for fun, they don't worry about memorizing every detail for an upcoming test. They enjoy what they read and are likely to read faster.

Teens who are able to read quickly also tend to understand more of what they read. Their vocabularies grow—and these benefits carry over into success with school-related reading and standardized tests.

To encourage your teen to read for pleasure:

- **Demonstrate that reading is fun.** If you're reading something you enjoy, share it.
- **Read what your teen reads.** Ask to see an article your teen is reading. Talk about how it connects to something in your life. Ask your teen to do the same.
- **Listen to audiobooks.** Books that are too challenging to read alone can come to life when they are read aloud. When teens listen to a book, they are strengthening their vocabulary, fluency and listening skills. Suggest that your teen to listen to them while exercising, riding in the car or just relaxing.
- **Say that it's not necessary** to finish every book your teen is reading for pleasure. If the book is boring or too hard, your teen can just try another title. The key is for your teen to enjoy the time spent reading.

Take the 15-minute reading challenge with your teenager

High school students have a lot going on. But every teen needs strong vocabulary and reading comprehension skills—and the best way to improve those is through practice.

Make a pact with your teen that you will *both* spend 15 minutes each day reading. Fifteen minutes is easy. Your teen could wake up 15 minutes earlier and read in the morning, or spend 15 minutes reading before falling asleep at night. Your student could read during lunch or right after classes end.

Those 15-minute sessions will add up quickly. Fifteen minutes a day is almost two hours each week—or over 90 hours a year! That's 90



hours of practicing skills that your teen will need in years to come!

Are you and your teen ready to take the challenge?

Recommend effective reading strategies for different classes



Does your teen know that different reading strategies can help in different classes? For example, when reading:

- **Math**, encourage your teen to read it at least twice. The first reading should be done quickly to get an overview. The second reading will take more time. Have your teen concentrate on the key points, take notes, and work through sample problems step by step. This will help your teen understand how to proceed when solving that type of problem in the future.
- **History**, suggest that your teen start at the last page and read the questions or summary. This will

provide an idea of the key points of the chapter. Then, your teen should check the headings and words in boldface type, paying special attention to photos and graphs, which often contain critical information. Only after doing all these things should your teen start at the beginning and read to the end.

- **Science**, have your teen start with the vocabulary and write down unfamiliar words and learn their meanings. Then, your student can look for the parts of the words that appear in other science terms. A student who understands that *biology* is the study of living things can figure out that *geology* is the study of the earth.