

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



April 2021

Worth County Schools
Home of the Tigers

Strong study habits reinforce new knowledge and emerging skills

Your teen's classes may be in English, history, science and math, but he is building more than just academic knowledge. He's also learning to plan ahead, think critically, solve problems and control impulses.

Effective study habits are vital. In order to process complex and abstract material, your teen needs to practice his new thinking and planning skills.



To help your teen reinforce his learning, suggest that he:

- **Rely on routines.** Maintain consistent expectations for your teen with regard to attendance and completing schoolwork and help him develop processes for meeting them.
- **Create study schedules** before tests. Encourage him to track his commitments and block out study times on a calendar.
- **Color-code materials** to stay organized. In each class, he could write down assignments in blue ink, new information in red and long-term project details in green, for example. The colors will help him know at a glance how to handle the material.
- **Make diagrams** to visualize new information and relate it to what he already knows. Seeing facts in graphic form may make it easier for him to understand and recall them later.



Help your teen be a proactive student

Reactive people wait for things to happen to them. *Proactive* people try to make the things they want happen. Encourage your teen to be proactive about her:

- **Studies.** She should study over time, rather than waiting until the last minute to try to memorize a huge amount of material.
- **Future.** Help your teen set goals and plan small steps she can take each day toward her objectives.
- **Worries.** Have your teen list her concerns in two columns. On the left she should list things she can affect by her actions. On the right, she can list things that she has

no control over. Then urge her to focus on the left side.

- **Decisions.** Teach your teen to think through the pros and cons of her options before she acts.
- **Feelings.** Instead of holding a grudge, for example, your teen can calmly confront someone: "What you said was hurtful. I hope it won't happen again."

Source: S. Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, Simon & Schuster.

Step up to math, science

Taking three or four years of high school math and science widens your teen's college and career options. For success in these subjects, remind him to:

- **Study** every day.
- **Start** by reviewing.
- **Stay** up to date. Studying science and math is like climbing stairs. Progress is made step by step.



Share sites that offer help

When help from the teacher isn't immediately available, an online resource may help your teen get unstuck. Point her to:

- **eLearn.fyi** (<https://elearn.fyi>). Created by a high school student, this database lets users sort over 300 websites by grade or subject matter to find what they need.
- **Khan Academy** (www.khanacademy.org). Provides instructional videos on math, history, science and more.
- **CK-12** (www.ck12.org/student). Offers text, videos, study guides and interactive practice on a variety of topics.

Source: C. Bamberger, "Student seeks to create the 'Netflix of online learning,'" *The Hechinger Report*, niswc.com/elearn.

Turn on your teen's curiosity

Students who learn because they want to know things are more likely to persist and retain material than kids motivated only by grades. To fuel your teen's drive to learn:

- **Ask what he hopes** to get out of an assignment or class.
- **Listen with interest** when he describes class content. Ask follow-up questions.
- **Help him recognize** how good it feels to master a learning goal.





How much should parents help with daily schoolwork?

Q: I am still helping my ninth grader with her assignments. Is she too old for this?

A: High school students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning. Your involvement in your teen's education is still important. But rather than helping her *do* her assignments, provide the structure, example and encouragement that will support her efforts to do them for herself.

For example, continue to:

- **Stick with a regular time** for doing assignments.
- **Talk about what your teen is learning.** Try asking questions like, "What did you learn today that surprised you?" and "Have you ever read anything like this before?"
- **Show her that reading** and learning are family priorities. Discuss books and news items with your teen. Look for educational programs to watch together. And tell your teen about the things you are learning.
- **Share strategies.** If your teen isn't sure how to plan for a large project, walk her through the process step by step.
- **Notice and compliment** your teen's hard work. When she's tackling a challenge, let her know you believe she can overcome it.



Are you helping your teen do better?

There is still time for students who are performing poorly in one or more classes to turn things around before the end of the year. Are you doing all you can to identify problems and support your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you recognize** the signs (falling grades, missed classes or assignments) that your teen may be having difficulties?
- ___ **2. Do you help** your teen avoid feeling helpless? Have him identify one thing he can do now to address the problem.
- ___ **3. Do you teach** your teen that asking for help when he needs it is a sign of strength? Urge him to reach out to teachers.
- ___ **4. Do you ask** your teen's counselor about resources if your teen needs more help than the school can provide?
- ___ **5. Do you work** with your teen on building time management and organization skills?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen make academic improvements. For each no, try that idea.

"And so each venture is a new beginning."
—T. S. Eliot

Practice builds a work ethic

In one survey, 80 percent of employers said they look for a strong work ethic when making a new hire. In high school, your teen can strengthen his work ethic every day by:

- **Attending his classes** prepared to work and turning in assignments on time.
- **Planning his time** and staying motivated without reminders.
- **Participating fully** in group projects.

Source: NACE, "The Top Attributes Employers Want to See on Resumes," niswc.com/workethic.

Beat the rejection blues

A college rejection can throw seniors for a loop. When your teen is ready to talk, acknowledge that rejection hurts. But remind her that it doesn't mean that she's a bad student. Schools often have to turn down qualified applicants for lack of space.

Then help her make a plan for moving forward. Talk about what she wanted to study at that school. Chances are good there are similar programs somewhere else. Or could she take community college classes and reapply to her dream school next year?

Find a 'green time' balance

A recent research analysis suggests that spending more time outdoors (green time) can offset the negative effects of too much screen time. While excess screen time is linked with anxiety and depression, getting outside reduced adolescents' stress and enhanced positive feelings of independence.

With teens spending more time on screens for school, limiting recreational screen time is important. Challenge your teen to match every hour of non-school screen time with an hour of green time.



Source: T.K. Oswald and others, "Psychological impacts of 'screentime' and 'green time' for children and adolescents: A systematic scoping review," *PLoS ONE*, niswc.com/greentime.

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