



Whose kids? Our Kids!

TEENS AND STUDY HABITS

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Parents make a difference!

Research shows that children do better in school and have more positive attitudes about learning when their parents are involved in school life. Many parents become less involved with school activities as their children move from elementary to middle to high school. Yet, parental involvement in middle and high school is very important.

During middle and high school, teens' responsibilities at school tend to increase. They have more homework, longer classes, more involved projects, and presentations. This is a critical time to develop good study habits and parents can make a difference! There are several ways you can encourage your child to develop good study habits and stay involved in your teen's education.

"I like to watch TV or text my friends while I study. My parents ask if my homework is done, but they don't know what my assignments are."

Get organized

- Does your teen have a clean, quiet place to study?
- Does your teen have the supplies needed to complete an assignment?
- Does your teen use a planner to help organize important assignments and upcoming project due dates?
- Does your teen have a reliable way to access a computer with the internet at school, at home, at a relative's home, or at a public library to complete assignments?

Help your teen get organized. Make it a point to see that school supplies, including books, binders, and papers, are organized. Have a place where your teen can easily find ruled or blank paper, extra pens, a calculator, etc. If you help organize the tools for studying it will be much easier for your child. It is equally important that your child have an organized space for studying. Keep a table or desk clear of clutter so that workspace will always be available.

Help organize your teen's schedule. Middle school and high school assignments often need to be managed over days or weeks since projects can build on class discussions over a long period of time. Write assignment due dates on a family calendar and encourage your teen to use a planner to map out progress and deadlines.

Minimize distractions

- Is your teen studying with the TV on, while on the phone, or while listening to music?
- Is your teen constantly interrupted by friends texting, calling, or stopping over?
- Is your teen spending time on social media while studying?

Studying is best done when distractions are minimized. We all think we are better at multi-tasking or paying attention to multiple things than we really are. Set rules about smartphones, television, and other technologies that can easily distract your teen during study time. If study time means "no social media" or "no TV," then make sure you follow your own rules. If you're watching television or scrolling through social media, it may still distract your child from homework. Studies show that the mere presence of a phone in the room makes it difficult for our brains to pay attention to another task, such as homework. This includes phones used by other people in the room, or even our own phone turned off and placed upside down on our desk. For some teens, listening to quiet music while studying is helpful, but this is not true for all. Teens study best when they are relaxed and focused. See what works best for your teen and set the rules accordingly.



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Check in

- Do you know what homework your child is working on?
- Do you know which class is most difficult for your child?
- Do you know what project is due next week?

Remember, your teen wants independence, but periodic checks can be helpful to keep on track. Review your child's assignments, at least weekly. Ask about the projects being worked on, what is required, when they are due, and when your child anticipates finishing. If a paper is due in two weeks, don't ask about it the day before it's due. But also remember that checking in periodically about your teen's progress doesn't mean constantly nagging your teen about it. Give your teen some room to establish their own study habits and schedules; if their system is not successful, then guide them with problem-solving questions about what other approaches they can try.

Get on schedule

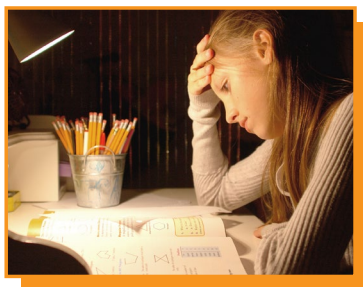
- What time is dinner?
- What time does your teen go to bed?
- What time does your teen study?

Help your teen develop good study habits by setting a regular study schedule. A consistent family dinner can be beneficial for both your family and for your teen's studying. Designate the hour after dinner as a time to study. Turn off all phones, shows, and music. Model this behavior



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for your teen by using this time yourself to read or work on a project. Get on a schedule so that the expectations for each evening are clear. Most school tests are scheduled well in advance; spending a short amount of time studying each night will produce better results than cramming the night before. Teach your teen that studying and learning the material is more important than simply plugging through homework assignments.



Is your teen doing too much?

Take a good look at your teen's overall time commitments. Is your child working a part-time job, playing sports, socializing, and volunteering? While extracurricular activities are great, it is possible to have too much of a good thing. You may need to help your teen set priorities. Perhaps cutting back on work hours or limiting the amount of socializing or smartphone use on school nights is necessary to keep your teen's studying on course. Talk about time management and the importance of balancing all the activities teens want to do with the things they need to do.

Keep expectations high

Studies have shown that the further in school parents believe their teens will go, the greater their adolescents' achievement. Your encouragement as a parent, your teen's clear understanding of your expectations, and more time spent on homework can lead to higher academic achievement. The opposite is also true: low parental expectations are related to low levels of student achievement. Be sure, though, that you keep your standards realistic, so your child doesn't give up or feel overwhelmed. In general, it is best to help your teen focus on daily goals, such as an hour of uninterrupted homework time; if you do that, the long-term goals are likely to take care of themselves.

Be supportive

You may not be able to offer assistance with solving a difficult chemistry equation, but you can provide encouragement, empathy, or even a mid-study snack for your hungry teen. Remind your teen often that you are proud of them and that their hard work is really showing you that they are responsible. Rather than praising your teen's intelligence, praise their effort. Intelligence is less important than effort. Reward your teen for developing good study habits and doing well at school; this will encourage your teen to keep up the good work!

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