

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

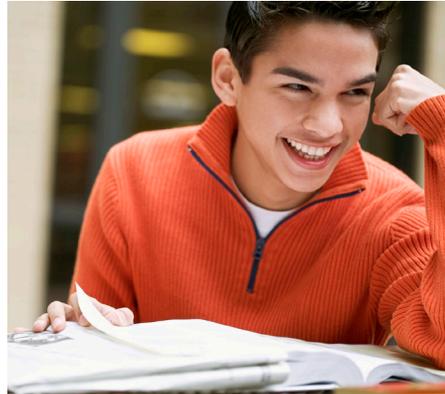


January 2019

Cotulla Independent School District

Underachieving teen? Avoid these common motivation mistakes

It can be very frustrating to know that your teen is capable of putting more effort into school than he does. But motivating teens can be tricky business. Here are three common traps many parents fall into, and how you can avoid them:



- 1. The need to control.** Some decisions, such as matters of safety, require parental control. But otherwise controlling your teen won't help him take responsibility for his own learning. Give him the supplies and work space he needs and tell him that you will do all you can to support his efforts. Then leave the decision of how to do the work to your teen—and let him live with the consequences.
- 2. The urge to rescue.** If you constantly bail your teen out, he has no incentive to stop problematic behaviors like procrastination. He also learns that you don't think he can do better. Avoid stepping right in, and he'll be more likely to figure solutions out for himself.
- 3. Anger and guilt.** You probably already know this doesn't work. When you get angry, your teen gets angrier. And the homework still doesn't get finished. So if you feel yourself losing your temper, take a break until you can approach things calmly.

Source: D. Heacox, Ed.D., *Up from Underachievement: How Teachers, Students, and Parents Can Work Together to Promote Student Success*, Free Spirit.



Study time is always on the agenda

Even if your teen has no assignments due the next day, there is always something she can do to keep up with or improve her schoolwork. Have her spend her regular homework time on one or more of the following activities:

- **Read something.** Whether it's a classic novel or a news magazine, any reading is worthwhile.
- **Review class notes.** Frequent review will help the material stick in her mind.
- **Create a test,** using her textbook and notes, then take it. Or she could ask you to quiz her.
- **Get started** on a long-term project. It's never too early, and

there's less pressure than when the deadline is looming.

- **Practice math problems.** The more she solves, the easier they'll become.
- **Write something.** It could be a story, a poem, a journal entry, a summary of the book she's reading, or a letter to a friend.

Source: E. Kiestler, "11 Secret Habits of Straight-A Students Even Post-Grads Will Want to Steal," *Reader's Digest*, niscw.com/studyttime.

Try this winning move

Practice is as critical to improving reading skills as it is to strengthening sports skills. If your teen loves sports, reading about his athletic heroes can help him do both. Suggest that he ask the librarian to help him find biographies of the all-stars in his sport.



Make 2019 the year your teen achieves goals

The joy of January is in new beginnings. Help your teen use this time to think about her academic goals and how she can meet them. Share this four-step process:

- 1. Take a look backward.** What goals did she meet last year? What lessons did she learn that will be helpful this year?
- 2. Envision success.** What does academic achievement look like to your teen? The more specific her image is, the better.
- 3. Write the goal down.** This encourages commitment.
- 4. Break the goal down** into smaller steps. Big goals take time. But your teen can start today to build the habits that will put her on the right path.

Rein in risky behavior

A strong desire for new experiences can lead teens into risky behavior. To encourage self-discipline in your teen:

- **Focus on big issues,** like schoolwork, safety and respect for others.
- **Make sure he knows** his limits and the consequences for violating them.
- **Grant more freedom** as your teen shows more responsibility.



Source: D. Romer and others, "Beyond stereotypes of adolescent risk taking: Placing the adolescent brain in developmental context," *Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience*, niscw.com/risky.



My teen doesn't talk to me anymore. What can I do?

Q: My daughter, a junior, talks to her friends constantly. But she has nothing to say to me! If I ask her how school went, she says, "OK." If I ask who she's going out with, she says, "Friends." We used to be close. How can I get her to talk to me again?



A: The short answer may be "Wait a few years." Right now your teen is trying to figure out who she is. To do that, she has to put some distance between the two of you. While this separation is developmentally normal, you still need to know what's going on at school and in her life. To improve communication between you and your teen:

- **Do some side-by-side activities**—exercising, cooking, driving places. Shared activity gives you something to talk about, and teens are more likely to talk if they don't have to make eye contact.
- **Insist that she provide basic details.** If she tells you she's going out with friends, say, "I need more information. Otherwise you will not be going anywhere with anyone." She doesn't have to share *all* the details of her life, but she should answer questions such as: *Where are you going? With whom? When will you be back?*

In a few years, your teen will be independent. That's when she's likely to call just to chat. In the meantime, allow her the space she needs to grow.



Do you encourage school success skills?

The lessons you can teach your teen are just as vital to his success in school as the material he's learning in class. Are you helping your teen build the skills he needs in order to achieve? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you discuss** the school rules with your teen, and let him know you expect him to follow them?
- ___ **2. Do you reinforce** the importance of getting to school on time?
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to use calendars and checklists to manage his time?
- ___ **4. Do you talk** with your teen about how to handle peer pressure, and role-play ways to say *no*?

- ___ **5. Do you make** it clear that your teen can always come to you for help or advice?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are laying the groundwork for your teen's success in school. For each no, try that idea.

"Success is the natural consequence of consistently applying the basic fundamentals."
—Jim Rohn

Put terms and definitions at your teen's fingertips

A study organizer is a tool that can help your teen learn terms or vocabulary for any class. To create one, she can:

- 1. Fold** a sheet of paper in half vertically.
- 2. Divide** the front half into several tabs by cutting from the edge to the fold.
- 3. Write** a term on each tab, then lift the tab up and write the definition on the paper underneath.
- 4. Study** by writing the definition for each term on a fresh sheet of paper, then flipping the organizer's tabs to see if she's right. Then do the reverse.

Top 10 lists are writing fun

Lists are a social media staple. To encourage your teen to write, challenge him to create his own Top 10 lists. Here are some ideas:



- **Top 10 Reasons** Why I Should Be Allowed to Use the Car on Friday.
- **Top 10 Worst Things** to Say to a Teen.
- **Top 10 Reasons** Why My Favorite Music Group is the Best.

Tips boost comprehension

Doing all the reading for school is only part of your teen's assignment. She must also understand what she reads. Teach her to:

- **Visualize.** After your teen reads a sentence or paragraph, she should close her eyes and try to "see" the scene.
- **Predict.** Smart readers constantly ask themselves what they think will happen next. This helps them stay focused.
- **Ask questions.** Before and after reading, your teen should ask herself things like: What is the main idea? What are the key points or events that support it?

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