

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

HIGH SCHOOL

Booker T. Washington High School
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STUDY SKILLS

Identify how your teen learns best

Some people learn best through words. Others learn best through music. These are just two of the ways we can be intelligent, based on a theory of learning from Dr. Howard Gardner of Harvard University. Help your teen identify her personal learning strengths. Then she can put them to use for success in school and in life. Perhaps your teen learns best by:

- **Using words.** If so, she has an advantage at school, since reading, writing and speaking are fundamentals. She can ask teachers for ways to use these skills in nonverbal subjects, such as math.
- **Using logic and numbers.** Your teen may be good at math and figuring out problems. Strengthen verbal skills by reading, writing and talking about things that interest her, such as games of strategy.
- **Working with others.** Suggest that your teen gather friends for a study group. Sharing ideas will help her understand and remember information.
- **Working alone.** Encourage projects. Many independent workers excel at them. Your teen can also boost language skills by keeping a journal.
- **Listening to or making music.** Your teen may find it fun and helpful to sing vocabulary words. While doing math or science problems, she might tap a rhythm with her feet.



Source: Susan Abel Lieberman, *The Real High School Handbook*, ISBN: 0-395-79760-8 (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1-800-225-3362, www.hmco.com).

DISCIPLINE

Help your teen learn desired behaviors

It's midnight and the car is just pulling into the driveway. Your teen has missed curfew—again. What should you do? Could this have been prevented? Here are some tips:

- **Make discipline meaningful.** Rules and consequences should be fair and sensible. Don't create unimportant rules or give punishments that don't teach anything.
- **Explain what you mean.** Discuss rules before they've been broken. Outline the results of

disobedience. Show confidence in your teen's ability to succeed.

- **Choose natural consequences.** If your teen comes home late, for instance, he has to stay home next weekend. This emphasizes the connection between responsibility and freedom.
- **Reward good behavior.** If your teen is always on time, maybe he can use the car more often. Compliment much more than you criticize.

ENCOURAGING WRITING

Have fun with 'Top 10' lists

TV's David Letterman is famous for his Top 10 lists. Encouraging your teen to come up with her own Top 10 list is a great way to motivate her to write—and start a conversation with you. Suggest these ideas and encourage your teen to think of other topics:

- **Top 10 Reasons** Why I Should Get the Car on Friday
- **Top 10 Worst Things** to Say to a Teen
- **Top 10 Reason** Why I Should Be Allowed to Get a Part-Time Job.

NEXT STEPS

Prepare for college now

Moving from high school to college is an important time for your teen. Help him prepare by having him:

- **Read up** on college life.
- **Consider** a study skills course. This will help him learn to manage the heavy academic load that most freshmen carry.
- **Write down** goals. What does he want to accomplish?



Source: Carol Carter, "College and Career Counseling," *FamilyEducation*, www.familyeducation.com/experts/advice/0,1183,1-22488,00.html.

AFTER SCHOOL

Make a decision about summer sports camp

The coach says it's time for your teen to attend a summer sports camp. But are summer camps worth it? Here are some suggestions for making a decision:

- **Be honest.** Does your teen *need* to go? Does she *want* to go?
- **Talk with the coach** and others who have gone to the camp.
- **Make safety** a top priority.



Source: "How to Choose a Kids' Sports Camp," www.ehow.com/how_13359_choose-kids-sports.html.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Should parents be honest about serious illnesses?

Q. I've just been diagnosed with cancer. I don't know what to tell my teenager. How much do I say? What can I do to help him through this time?

A. It's tough to be both a parent and a patient. Choosing the best treatment options is hard enough. But you also have the job of supporting your teen.

Teens can have a difficult time dealing with a parent's illness. They face their own emotional issues, so adding worry about a parent's health is challenging.

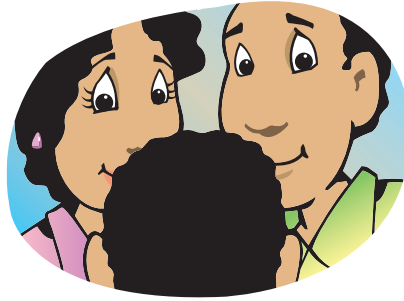
Yet it's important to be truthful. Your teen needs facts from you. You don't have to give him every detail, but share enough information to ease his fears if possible.

Be positive without sugarcoating the truth. If you show your feelings to your son, you give him permission to share his feelings as well.

Your teen may act out and rebel. Or he may try to take care of you. Both are normal reactions.

Tell his school as soon as you can. Some teens keep things together at home but act out at school. Give teachers the chance to be understanding and helpful.

Remember that ultimately, many parents say dealing with an illness strengthened their bonds with their teens.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you encouraging summer reading?

Teens who don't read over the summer often struggle when school starts. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging your teen to read this summer:

1. **Do you look** for books your teen might enjoy?
2. **Do you and your teen go** to the library more often in the summer?
3. **Do you ask** your teen to recommend books for you?
4. **Do you keep** lots of reading material around the house for your teen?
5. **Do you suggest** that your teen read books that her favorite movies are based on?

How did you do? Each yes answer will help your teen read more this summer. For each no answer, consider using that idea from the quiz to try to change your answer to yes.

"As a teenager, you are at the last stage in your life when you will be happy to hear that the phone is for you."

—Fran Lebowitz

BUILDING SCIENCE SKILLS

Your teen can succeed in the higher-level sciences

Higher-level science classes can be intimidating, but your teen will benefit from taking at least one. Share these tips:

- **Study** a little bit every day.
- **Keep up** with math.
- **Read** the textbook.
- **Review** solved problems.

Source: Anne Marie Helmenstine, "Top 5 Reasons Why Students Fail Chemistry," About.com, <http://chemistry.about.com/od/homeworkhelp/tp/blfailchem.htm>.

BUILDING CHARACTER

Three daily priorities can teach your teen empathy

Teach your teen to think about others around her. Each day, have her set out to do good things for:

1. **Her school.**
2. **Somebody else.**
3. **Herself.**

Thinking about other people gets easier over time. It will teach your teen to focus less on her own worries.

Source: Linda and Richard Eyre, *Teaching Your Children Values*, ISBN: 0-671-76966-9 (Fireside Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonsays.com).

STUDENT SAFETY

Make sure summer jobs are safe

While your teen's summer job is exciting, have him do his homework to stay safe. Here are some tips:

- **Make** sure he gets the necessary training.
- **Know** the law. Check out www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html.
- **Help** him remember to think ahead and report hazards to his boss.



Source: American Academy of Family Physicians, "Working Safely: Advice for Teens," <http://familydoctor.org/454.xml>.

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