

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School  
Santa Cruz Valley Union High School



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## Help your teen use a five-step process to remember reading

By high school, most students have mastered the basics of reading. But in order to learn and use what they read, students must also be able to recall the material. For many, that's a tougher challenge.

A five-step process can strengthen reading recall power. Encourage your teen to:



- 1. Visualize.** Albert Einstein is reported to have said, "If I can't picture it, I can't understand it." After reading a passage, your teen should try to create a mental image of the content.
- 2. Make predictions.** One way proficient readers stay focused on what they are reading is to predict what will happen next. When predicting, your teen should take the details in the material so far into account.
- 3. Consider questions.** Have your teen rephrase section headings in the text into questions. If the passage is about the Romans, for example, your teen might ask "How did the Romans conquer and hold their Empire?" If it is fiction, your teen could ask, "Why is the author telling this story?"
- 4. Make connections.** New information is most likely to stick if your teen relates it to previously-learned things.
- 5. Share the knowledge.** Ask your teen to present the material to you. Teaching new concepts to others enhances understanding and recall.



## Share strategies for better test results

To do their best on quizzes and tests, students need to know the subject material. But they also need to know *how* to approach test-taking. Review these basic strategies with your teen:

- **Pay close attention** to the directions. Reading them carefully will help prevent simple, avoidable mistakes. The directions might say, "Answer two of the following questions." Or, "Some multiple choice questions may have more than one correct answer. Choose the best one."
- **Use time wisely.** Your teen should scan the test before begin-

ning and budget time. For example, if an essay question is worth 50 points out of 100, your teen should spend half the time on it. If the test format allows, suggest answering all the easy questions first to maximize points. Your student should use any extra time to double-check work, reread the directions and confirm that the answers do what is being asked.

## Put your teen's skills to use

One of the most effective ways to extend learning at home is to create everyday opportunities for your student to apply school skills. Ask your teen to:

- **Calculate expenses,** discounts, mileage, etc.
- **Research answers** to questions that come up in conversation.
- **Supply reasons** and facts to support opinions.



## Respect keeps things civil

Respectful behavior makes interactions with others—in school and out—more productive. Talk with your teen about the need to:

- **Listen attentively.**
- **Speak in a polite tone.** Tone affects how others hear what your teen is saying.
- **Express differences of opinion** without insulting the other person.
- **Accept final rulings.** Continuing to argue a case when a parent or teacher stands firm rarely works.

## Create a school portfolio

Most high schoolers will get involved in lots of things over four years. Keeping a record of them in one place will be helpful when your teen is filling out college, scholarship and job applications. Help your teen start a file and regularly update details about:

- **Academics.** List classes and grades earned.
- **Extracurricular** activities. List clubs, volunteer work, sports, jobs, etc. Include dates of participation and leadership positions held.
- **Accomplishments.** List things like honor roll, language or computer skills, awards for artwork, essays, etc.





## My teen's study effort isn't working. What can I do?

**Q:** My student is struggling in a foreign language class. My teen does the work and studies, but just isn't getting it and may fail. That means repeating the class. Since my student is already trying, what should I do?

**A:** Willingness to put in effort is an important part of being a responsible student, and it will help your teen rise to this challenge. But students also need to learn that when one strategy isn't working, it's time to look for others.

To help, suggest that your teen:

- **Ask for a meeting** with the teacher. Your teen should explain current study efforts. Then they can discuss what the teacher thinks the issues are, and what your teen should do differently.
- **Schedule more study time.** Encourage your teen to practice recalling vocabulary words for 20 minutes each day (flash cards and apps like Quizlet can help). Then your teen can work on reading and verbs.
- **Go back to the beginning.** Have your teen look at early assignments and figure out where things got confusing. This is where to start reviewing.
- **Find extra help.** Is there a time when the teacher could work with your teen? Are there student tutors available? Does your family know someone who speaks the language that your teen could practice conversation with?



## Are you preparing for what comes next?

Students have lots of options after high school. Planning and preparing helps them make choices that will lead to a satisfying adult life. Are you helping your teen get ready? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you urge** your teen to explore the school's college and career resources?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you help** your teen find out the education needed to enter career fields of interest?
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to reach out to people working in those fields to learn more?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you suggest** ways to gain skills and experience, such as volunteering or starting a small business?

- \_\_\_ **5. Do you research** sources for financial aid with your teen?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your teen focus on the future. For each no, try that idea.*

*"Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now."*

—Alan Lakein

## News is food for thought

News articles are great for encouraging your teen to think about reading. Here are two ways to use the news:

- 1. Scroll through** recent articles and choose one your teen might find interesting. Read it yourself, then ask your teen to read it and give an opinion about it. Did your teen learn anything?
- 2. Read editorials together.** Have your teen pick an editorial for you both to read and discuss. Do you agree or disagree with the points the author made? Are there other facts to consider?



## Find positive influencers

Peer pressure isn't always negative! To help your teen benefit from positive peer influence, encourage activities that offer exposure to peers who have the similar interests and values. Service clubs at school and volunteer opportunities are ideal places to find them.

You can also get to know the families of your teen's friends. Discuss your rules and values with them. Then, when your teen says, "everyone does it," you'll be able to give examples of kids who don't.

## A tip for making rules stick

The key to establishing effective rules is taking your teen's need for independence into account while keeping some control. Consider these questions when setting rules:

- **Have I listened to** my teen's views on this rule? Get your teen's input before you make a final decision.
- **Does my teen understand** what will happen if this rule is broken? Agree on consequences before misbehavior occurs.
- **Am I setting an example** by following this rule myself?

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