

## Teachers' Learning Secrets to Use at Home

As a parent of a teenager, whether you believe it or not, you are STILL your child's most influential teacher. How can you encourage your teen to study? What can you do at home to improve your teen's reading, writing, or math scores? Here are some teachers' learning secrets you can use at home.

1. Ask thought-provoking questions. Be sure to avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no". Try asking: "What was the most interesting thing you did in school today?" "What do you think will be on your next science test?" "If you were the teacher, how would you teach algebra?" You'll know the idea is working when your child starts asking you good questions, too.
2. Establish routines. Repetition helps teens learn to organize their world. It gives them a foundation to help cope with the rest of their lives. Try these additional tips:
  - a. Have a time and place for your child to study.
  - b. Give your child responsibility for some household chores.
  - c. Establish a regular "lights out" time for your child.
  - d. Reserve some special times to spend with your kids, too. Perhaps you'll have a regular family popcorn or pizza night. Perhaps you'll spend one weekend afternoon doing something outdoors.
3. Recognize that children learn in different ways. When it comes to helping teens learn, there's no such thing as "one size fits all." Children are different—and they learn in different ways. Here are some of the different ways they learn:
  - a. **Visual Learners:** Visual learners learn best where they can see what they're learning. To help them study, you might put up a map of the world with different countries' capitals highlighted, make a timeline of important dates, create flash cards to study vocabulary words for English or a foreign language, or encourage them to draw a picture or diagram of what they're trying to learn.
  - b. **Auditory Learners:** Auditory learners learn mainly through their ears. They could probably say the answer...but can't always write it down. To help them study, you might make up poems, rhymes, or other memory cues. For example: Columbus sailed the ocean blue in fourteen hundred ninety-two. Working together, read important lessons aloud. Use a tape recorder. See if you can check out books on tape from your public library.

- c. **Kinesthetic Learners:** Kinesthetic learners learn through their bodies. When they have to sit still, their brains seem to go to sleep. To help them learn, you might have them move around while studying or encourage them to read while standing up. Suggest acting out a lesson from history, and suggest using a finger on the page to focus the eyes while reading.

### **Tips for Tutoring Your Teen**

1. Open the lines of communication. Point out that you know your teen is doing fine in, say, simple equations, but that the teacher says he needs extra help in graphing. Say you want to help and ask if that's okay.
2. Sit next to your teen rather than across from him.
3. Give directions slowly. Your teen's difficulty may be with following directions.
4. Work through one step and one problem at a time.
5. Look at each other when you talk. It's easier to see confusion than it is to hear it.
6. Don't skip problems. You want your teen to develop the habit of confronting challenges.
7. Don't get discouraged when your teen does.
8. Minimize the use of negative phrases, such as "That's wrong". Just restate the question and give your child more clues to help him/her get the answer.
9. Try to have some fun. Gentle teasing and puns can make the job more enjoyable for the both of you.
10. Switch places. Ask your child to be the teachers and explain the subject to you. As he/she teaches you, he/she will be learning the material.