



Research shows 'interleaving' is effective for learning

When high school students work on assignments at home, most take it one subject at a time. They do math until it's finished. Then, they move on to Spanish and then history.

This technique is called *blocked practice*. But new research shows it is less effective than a technique called *interleaving*. To interleave, students mix several subjects or topics while they are doing their homework. Instead of AAA-BBB-CCC, they do ABC-ABC-ABC.

Here's how to put interleaving to work: Instead of doing 20 math problems, have your teen do seven or eight, then move to a different subject. After changing subjects, students have to work a little harder to remember what they know. ("What is the Spanish

word for to try?") That effort will actually help your teen recall the material the next time it's needed. And long-term retention should be the goal of any study session.

It's important; however, that students don't just use interleaving as an excuse to quit when something seems hard. Instead, they should keep returning to the subject until they feel a sense of mastery.

There's no question that your teen will work harder when using this study technique. But stronger recall power is worth it. As one teacher says, "It may feel worse now. But it will feel better when they take the test!"

Source: G.M. Donoghue and J.A.C. Hattie, "A Meta-Analysis of Ten Learning Techniques," *Frontiers in Education*, Frontiers Media S.A.

Family time is still a priority for most teens



As teenagers grow older, they naturally seek more independence. However, they still value strong family bonds. By spending quality time together, you can maintain a positive and supportive relationship with your teen.

To bolster your connection:

- **Devote time each day** to your teen. Turn off digital devices and offer your undivided attention. Your teen may want to talk about something, share a new song with you or go for a short walk together. It doesn't matter what you do, as long as you are completely engaged.
- **Show an interest** in your teen's life. Ask about school, friendships and extracurricular activities. Attend performances and games when families are invited.
- **Be welcoming.** Get to know your teen's friends. Offer to drive them to an activity. Make your home a place where they can feel comfortable hanging out. You will get to know the people important to your teen—and know they are all in a safe place.

Help an underachieving student get back on track with three tips



It's frustrating when you know your teen has the ability to succeed but seems not to want to. This is the trap of underachievement.

Experts suggest families do three things to motivate teens:

1. **Show you care** about your teen as a *person*, not just a student. If a long lecture about getting better grades were the trick to motivation, there would be no such thing as an underachiever. Make time to talk to your teen about life, watch a favorite movie together, play a board game together. This helps your teen feel valued—a key step in boosting motivation.
2. **Recognize improvements.** You may not be thrilled when your teen brings home a low C on a

world history quiz. But if the last quiz grade was a D, your teen has made progress. A pat on the back with a simple, "You brought your grade up. I believe in you!" can work wonders.

3. **Harness the power of friends.** If your teen doesn't want your help, consider enlisting the help of one of your teen's friends. "Darren is in your history class. Maybe you could study for the next test together."

"I can't change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination."

—Jimmy Dean

Recommend activities that help your teenager enjoy time alone



The teenage years are a time of social connection. It may seem as if your teen can't make a move unless accompanied by a friend who is doing the exact same thing.

While peer relationships are important, it's equally crucial for teens to cultivate independence and self-reliance. To foster these qualities, encourage your teen to engage in solo activities such as:

- **Reading.** Your teen is less likely to feel lonely when immersed in a good book, or any other enjoyable reading material.
- **Exercise.** Suggest daily walks when your teen can listen to music or an audiobook.
- **Cooking.** Growing teens are usually drawn to the kitchen. Cooking is a life skill that involves reading, math and time management. And as a bonus, your teen can eat the creations!
- **Arts and crafts.** Teens are often wonderfully creative and can produce beautiful work when they give it the time.
- **Journaling.** Encourage your teen to capture thoughts each day. Writing helps teens reflect on their ideas, feelings and experiences.
- **Daydreaming.** Let your teen know it's OK to spend some time just thinking and imagining. Daydreaming gives teens a much-needed mental escape.

Are you instilling kindness in your high schooler?



When students are responsible and caring members of the school community, everyone benefits. Are you promoting kindness in your household? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ 1. **Do you model** kindness by treating your teen and others with consideration and respect?
- ___ 2. **Do you teach** your teen to be kind on social media? It is never OK to post mean or hurtful comments online.
- ___ 3. **Do you promote** empathy by saying things like "Remember how you felt when you didn't get invited to that event?"
- ___ 4. **Do you offer** praise when you see your teen being kind to others?
- ___ 5. **Do you encourage** your teen to befriend a wide variety of students—even if others don't welcome them as easily?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are promoting kindness in your high schooler. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Sleep impacts your teenager's health and school performance



A lack of sleep can significantly impact your teen's ability to learn, focus and perform well in school. To ensure your teen's academic success and overall well-being, it's crucial to prioritize quality sleep.

Share these research-based facts with your teen:

- **Teens need 8 to 10 hours of sleep** each night to function well the next day. Only 15 percent of teens report getting 8.5 hours of sleep each night.
- **A consistent sleep schedule** helps teens feel less tired. Your teen may be tempted to sleep until noon on weekends, but that only makes waking up harder on Monday morning. Create a routine for going to bed and waking up.
- **Nothing replaces good sleep.** Vitamins, pills and drinks with caffeine are not substitutes for a night of restful sleep.
- **Sleep deprivation** causes the same impairment as having a blood alcohol content of .08 percent. This means that driving while sleepy is dangerous.
- **A lack of sleep** causes many teens to feel depressed and stressed.
- **Using technology**, eating, drinking and exercising in the hours right before bedtime makes it harder to sleep. Suggest quiet, calm activities that will relax your teen's brain. Taking a warm bath or shower right before bedtime can help your teen's body relax and get into sleep mode.

Source: E. Suni, "Teens and Sleep," Sleep Foundation, OneCare Media, LLC.

Q: My high schooler is overweight and is being teased by students in several classes and on the bus. My teen doesn't want to ride on the bus to school anymore and has started skipping some classes. How can I support my teen and turn this around?

Questions & Answers

A: Sadly, your teen is not the only student facing this issue. Students who are overweight are often taunted by their classmates.

What's happening to your high schooler is bullying—which can have a significant negative effect on self-confidence and academic achievement. It's important to take this issue seriously.

To support your teen:

- **Have a discussion.** Sometimes, teens who are targets of bullying start to feel that it's their fault. Say that bullying behavior is never OK and you are here to support your teen.
- **Encourage your teen to talk** to the school counselor about the weight-shaming. The school needs to be aware of what's going on so they can address it.
- **Focus on your teen's interests** and strengths. Encourage activities that your teen excels at and enjoys. This can boost self-esteem and provide a sense of accomplishment. It can also help your teen connect with like-minded individuals and build positive relationships.
- **Make a family health plan.** Talk with your teen's doctor to set appropriate goals. Could your family make better food choices? Could you add more activity to your day? The results won't be immediate, but over time, you and your teen may see a big change.

Suggest creative ways for your teen to strengthen writing skills



Help your teen build important writing skills by encouraging writing every day. It's the best way for students to improve.

To spark your teen's interest, suggest these fun writing activities:

- **Start a family story.** Have your teen write the opening paragraph in a notebook, then pass it on to another family member to continue. Keep the cycle going so that everyone contributes to the story.
- **Invent "mad libs."** Have your teen write a two-paragraph story and replace 10 of the words with blank spaces. Your teen should look up each missing word's part of speech and write it in the blank space. Jake ran to the window and saw a (*noun*). It (*verb*) from the (*adjective*) tree and was never seen again!" Then, your teen can ask family members to supply corresponding words to fill the blanks and create a funny tale.
- **Write letters.** Suggest that your teen write to a family member or friend who lives in a different town. Or your teen could write a fan letter to a favorite author, athlete or celebrity.
- **Keep a scrapbook.** When storing photos, ticket stubs, notes from friends and other mementos, your teen can write descriptions of why they are meaningful.
- **Write a family newsletter.** Give your teen the task of reporting on big events. Suggest conducting interviews, writing articles and sending out a newsletter to family members and friends.

It Matters: Study Skills

Help your teen prepare for all types of tests



The tests your high schooler takes will likely be longer and more complex than tests were in middle

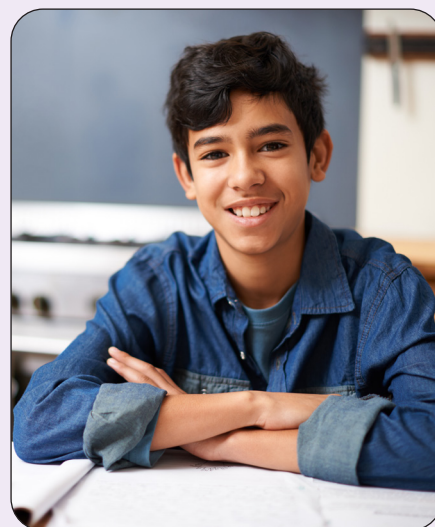
school. There may also be different formats. Share these hints to help your teen prepare for:

- **Essay tests.** Your teen should create sample questions based on the main ideas in the material. Then, your teen can practice writing answers to these questions in paragraph form. Remind your teen to write clear, complete sentences.
- **Short-answer tests.** For fill in the blank and other short-answer questions, your teen needs to know facts. Memory techniques, such as making a mental picture of material, can help. Chunking, which is learning facts in groups instead of one at a time, is also an effective technique.
- **Problem-solving.** Problem-solving tests are usually in math and science. To do well, your teen will need to know how to set up equations and how to do the calculations. Daily practice, even when there is no assigned work, is the key to studying for these types of tests. See the article on this page for more math test-taking tips!
- **Multiple choice.** Your teen should read each question carefully and eliminate incorrect answers to narrow down options. Key words, like *always*, *never*, *all* and *none* often signal incorrect answers. When unsure of an answer, your teen should make an educated guess.

Your teen can conquer math tests with these test-taking tips

Test anxiety can be a common challenge for many students, especially when it comes to math. To help your teen approach math tests with confidence, share these effective test-taking strategies:

1. **Read through the test.** Your teen should take a few minutes to skim the math problems and place a check beside problems that will be easy to answer.
2. **Answer easy questions first.** Getting those out of the way will build confidence and leave more time for your teen to answer the tougher problems.
3. **Pace yourself.** Your teen should count how many questions are left and divide the remaining time available. This will help your student avoid spending too much time on any one problem and ensure there is enough time to complete the entire test.



4. **Show all work.** Even if your teen doesn't get the right answer, the teacher may award partial credit.
5. **Don't waste time erasing.** Instead, your teen should cross through the work the teacher should ignore.
6. **Ask, "Does this make sense?"** about every answer.

Share strategies to help your high schooler get organized



There is a big test tomorrow and your teen's class notes are no where to be found.

Your student must have left them somewhere, or accidentally throw them away. Either way, they are gone—and cannot be used as a study aid for your teen.

Being organized is vital for school success. To promote organization, encourage your teen to:

- **Tidy up after study sessions.** When things are where they belong, your

teen will avoid wasting time looking for them.

- **Schedule a Friday clear out.** Your teen should throw away trash and file school papers.
- **Use sticky notes.** Your teen can place one on the spine of each book that needs to come home from school. Your teen can also use them to jot down reminders.
- **Prepare for tomorrow tonight!** Each night, your teen can make lunch and place everything needed for school by the door.