

Help your teen succeed in math

For students in secondary school

Take a trip back to the time when you were 13 and you saw this for the first time: $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. Was this something that made complete sense to you? Does it make any sense now? Or did it make you feel like there was a secret language that you didn't know how to speak?

Math can feel like a strange new language to a teen especially as concepts get tougher as they approach high school. Here are some tips to help you help your teen cope with math.

Mathematicians are not born, but made

If you ask most adults their feelings about learning math, some may relay a frustrating experience. Some students seem to understand concepts quickly while others don't.

The first thing parents should keep in mind is that **all students** can learn math skills. Math is a skill, and like most other skills, it requires practice and encouragement.

Math and numeracy are critical life skills just like reading and writing. **Remain positive** when talking to your teen and reinforce the importance of learning math.

Minimize the negative messages your teen hears about math.

Communication is the key

As tough as it may be at times, it is important to talk to your teen about his experience in math.

Ask her what the teacher is covering in class. Encourage her to use the vocabulary that is being used in class. If you don't understand something, ask her to explain it. Having her communicate her understanding of a concept is one of the best ways to reinforce it and to uncover gaps in understanding.

Ask him when the next key assessment dates are. Write them down on a calendar that is in a centrally located place in your home. Make sure he is preparing for these assessments and provide him with a good environment free of distractions.

Discuss her short- and long-term goals. Her choice of which math course to take in high school will be affected by her post-secondary plans. Find out about the different options available to your teen.

What's happening at school?

Today's high school math class may look a bit different from the one you were in when you were in school. Graphing calculators, GSP and manipulatives are now key components of the modern math classroom.

One of the most important factors in student success in any subject is parental involvement. **Contact your teen's math teacher early** and find out the following:

- What extra help is available?
- When are the key assessment dates?
- How can you track your teen's progress?
- Can you get a copy of the course outline?
- What can you do to support the work of the teacher?
- What equipment is necessary to support the work in the course?

Some teachers have websites that they use to post homework assignments and other information.

Help her stay organized. Most schools provide students with an agenda. Encourage her to record daily homework assignments and key dates in her agenda.

Encourage him to take an active role in his education. In the end, all your hard work and interest in his education will encourage him to take the initiative and be responsible for it himself. Your teen is the one with the most at stake. The more effort he puts in, the more he will get out of it.

Homework?? Give me a break!

The regular completion of homework is critical to any student's success in math. If a student does not practice the skills introduced in class, he will find it difficult to demonstrate his understanding of those skills.

If your teen comes home repeatedly saying they have no homework, contact their teacher. Some work can be completed in class or at other times during the day, but it is rare that this is a regular occurrence.

Provide your teen with a routine whereby she completes her work at the same time every night. This should be done with no distractions and in a well-lit area. Check her work to ensure she has completed it.

Monitor his commitments outside of school. Many teens get so involved in other activities that it may be difficult for them to keep up with their schoolwork.