



Strategies to improve reading comprehension

Strong reading comprehension skills are one of the foundations of a successful academic career. According to the Institute of Reading Development, students with strong reading comprehension skills get a big boost in all subjects, including math and science. Though the benefits of reading comprehension are well documented, many students are struggling in this area of their academics. Officials with the National Center for Education Statistics note that, over the last decade, students have made no progress in reading performance. That likely comes as no surprise to seasoned educators, as data indicates students are reading less outside of school than they have in years past. Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates the percentage of public school students who said they read 30 minutes

or more a day declined by 4 percent between 2017 and 2019, dipping below 50 percent overall in the latter year. There's likely a multitude of reasons why students now read less than they used to. Parents concerned about their children's reading comprehension can try these strategies to bolster this highly valuable skill.

- Let kids read what they like. The tutoring professionals at Oxford Learning® report that 73 percent of students indicate they would read more if they found books they liked. Parents can address this issue by taking children to their local libraries and letting them choose which books to check out. The more practice kids get with reading, the more their comprehension skills develop.
- Read aloud to children.

Various studies have found that reading aloud to children significantly benefits literacy development. One study from the National Association for the Education of Young Children found that listening to others read helps children develop key understanding and skills, including how stories are written. In addition, the Reading Rockets project, which aspires to bring reading research to life in the hopes of helping young children develop into strong, confident readers, notes that children can listen on a higher language level than they can read. That makes complex ideas more accessible.

- Ask questions when reading to children. When reading to children, parents can compound the benefits of this activity by asking youngsters questions about the book. Asking what, when, where, why, and

how can encourage children to look for answers to these questions while they're being read to. As students advance and then read more on their own, parents can encourage

them to ask these questions of themselves (if they're not already doing so on their own). Asking and answering these questions is a great way to strengthen reading comprehension

skills. Strong reading comprehension skills can help students reach their academic potential. Parents can employ various strategies to help children bolster those skills.

Parents concerned about their children's reading comprehension can try several strategies to bolster this highly valuable skill.

How much should a backpack weigh?

Backpacks are handy tools that carry an array of gear. Students rely on them to hold books, while

Backpacks are handy resources, but overstuffed backpacks may cause injury.

hikers and campers utilize backpacks to carry items such as food and beverages that keep them safe on trails. Even office workers may turn to backpacks to carry laptops or other tools of the trade. Backpacks are handy resources, but overstuffed backpacks may cause injury. Backpacks should only carry weight that people can handle, and there are guidelines that can help people safely utilize backpacks.

The weight of a backpack depends on the age of the person using it. Generally speaking, adults

should not exceed 20 percent of total body mass when loading backpacks. That means a healthy person weighing 200 pounds should not carry more than 40 pounds in his or her backpack.

In regard to children, researchers indicate that a child's backpack should weigh no more than 10 percent of what the student weighs. Those findings are based on a Spanish study involving 49 primary school-aged children. Therefore, if a child weighs 70 pounds, he or she should only carry up to 7 pounds in the backpack.

Individuals also should follow a few other backpack recommendations to alleviate injuries. It's not a good idea to wear a backpack hanging from only one shoulder. A backpack should be worn on both shoulders, and ideally with a lumbar strap. This will help to prevent muscular pains by providing well-rounded support.

A backpack with wide, padded straps can minimize pressure on the shoulders, back and collarbone. Backpacks made of lightweight material will not add much additional weight to what's being carried. Another tip is for children and adults to pack the heaviest item carried in the backpack closest to the center of the back to minimize strain.

Failure to follow guidelines may result in pain and injuries and have negative effects on balance, which may increase the risk of falls or other injuries.

Whenever possible, individuals may want to use trolley backpacks, which are on wheels. They can be dragged, alleviating the need to carry heavy loads.

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BACK TO SCHOOL
Safety

Review these safety tips with your kids

1. Opt for a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and keep it light. You may want to consider a rolling backpack for heavy books.
2. At the bus stop, wait for the bus to reach a complete stop before approaching it.
3. Stay seated on the school bus until it arrives at your stop, and remember to wear your seatbelt. Always keep your head and arms inside the bus.
4. Use the handrail when exiting the bus, and cross in front of the bus so the driver can see you. Remember to check both ways for traffic before crossing the street.
5. If you walk to school, go with a buddy, and avoid crossing through any empty lots or fields along the way.
6. If you ride a bike or scooter to school, remember to always wear your helmet.
7. Don't talk to strangers, and never accept gifts or rides from strangers.
8. Cross the street only at designated crosswalks, and obey school crossing guards.
9. If you're bullied or see somebody being bullied, tell a teacher or trusted adult.
10. Memorize your home address and phone number. In case of an emergency, call 911.

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School Bus SAFETY TIPS

1- Seat belts should always be worn, even on the bus. Never get out of your seat while the bus is moving.

2- Always look both ways before crossing the street and always use the crosswalks.

3- Find a safe place away from the road to wait for the school bus.

4- Every time you ride your bike, be sure to wear a helmet.

5- Tell a teacher or parent if somebody is bothering you.

6- Your phone number is important to know—memorize it. Also be familiar with other im-

portant phone numbers like the police and fire departments.

7- Walk to school with a friend, and follow a familiar route where you won't be alone. Never talk to strangers along the way.

8- Instructions during fire drills should be followed carefully. This way you'll know what to do in a real fire.

9- Say no to smoking and drugs!

10- Exercise caution with unfamiliar animals you may see on your way to school. Remember, WITH SCHOOL not every animal is friendly.

Play It SAFE at School

by following these smart tips!

• Make sure you know your full name, street address and phone number including area code. If you can't remember all of these things, carry them on a piece of paper.

• Never get into anyone's car without your parents' permission.

• Always tell your parents if you are going somewhere after school.

• Cross streets only at corners, and always look both ways before crossing.

• Observe and obey traffic signals as well as crossing guards.

• Know how to use the telephone for help in case of an emergency.

• Walk, don't run, across streets. If you are riding a bike, walk it across the street.

• If you are walking where there are no sidewalks, walk on the shoulder of the left side of the road, so you are facing oncoming traffic.

• When waiting for the school bus, stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to enter. Use the handrail to enter and exit the bus.

• When leaving the bus, walk ten giant steps away from the bus before crossing in front of it. Never cross behind the bus.

• Tell your parents, teacher or another trusted adult if somebody at school is making you feel uneasy or doing something you think is wrong.

• When walking to school, stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields and other places where there aren't many people around. Always walk with a buddy.

• If you are home alone after school, be sure to lock the door and call a parent as soon as you arrive. Never open the door for anyone you don't know well and trust.

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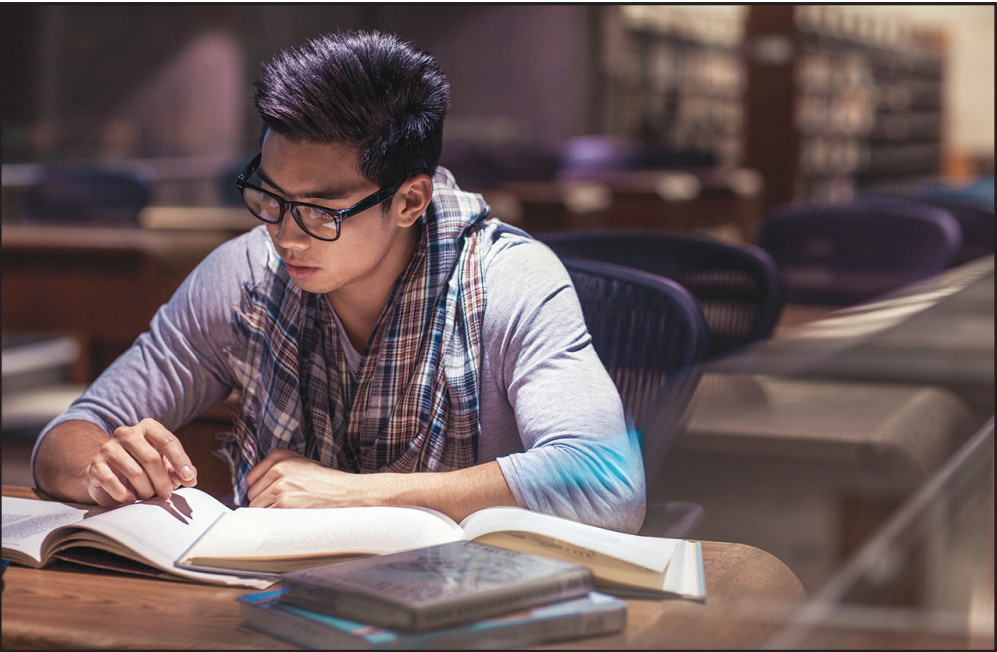
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Seven study tips for high school students

Assessments such as quizzes and exams help educators recognize areas where students are excelling and where they might need a little extra help. In addition to tests in the classroom, high schoolers generally take standardized testing for state or provincial assessment purposes. Testing may come easier to some students than others, but having solid study techniques can improve students' performance on a wide range of exams. In fact, research by Stanford scholars, whose data was published in Psychological Science, found that applying a strategic approach to studying helped college students improve their exam scores by an average of one-third of a letter grade. The testing preparation resource PrepScholar says it is important to build and maintain strong study habits to help students avoid undue stress and last-minute cramming. The following are seven

- techniques that may help foster good study skills.
- 1. Find value in the lessons.**
Many students lament that what they learn in school just isn't relevant in daily life. That can make the subject matter feel less important and uninteresting. Finding value in what one is learning and seeing how it can be applied outside of the classroom may make a student more inclined to learn and retain information.
 - 2. Avoid distractions.**
Study time is time to take a break from social media, video games and any other distractions that can pull a student away from studying. Constantly checking notifications can interrupt thoughts and make it hard to learn the material.
 - 3. Establish a study schedule.**
Develop a system and a schedule for studying.

- 4. Establish dedicated study spots.**
Students should locate places that work best for them as study and homework stations. Certain individuals may need the quiet of a library or a bookstore. Others may do best with the hum of conversation around them or in a group. There's no right or wrong study spot. Maintaining consistency will help the mind associate a place with studying.
- 5. Use grades as benchmarks and motivators.**
Blaming a teacher for a poor grade won't get a student anywhere. Rather, grades should indicate how well one is learning the material, and in turn, the effectiveness of students' studying habits. Students can tweak their habits if they find their



High school can be a challenge for some students. Learning great study skills will help.

- grades are not where they want them to be.
- 6. Rephrase material.**
Textbook language can be dry and unappealing. Students can try putting the material into their own words or rephrase passages to make them easier to remember and recall. Similarly, teaching or sharing the material with another person also may improve retention.
 - 7. Make a formula sheet.**
Depending on the subject, having a sheet with shortcuts, formulas or diagrams can put the material into smaller bursts of information that are easier to digest. Along this same vein, writing information down can help improve recall.
- These are a few study tips that high schoolers can utilize to improve their grades so they can be more successful in school.

Hidden sources of sugar that could be in kids' diets

Childhood obesity poses a serious threat to the long-term health of kids across the globe. According to the World Health Organization, 39 million children under the age of five were over-



Various foods and beverages, including ones kids typically love, are hidden sources of sugar.

weight or obese in 2020. That means that tens of millions of kids across the globe are facing a serious and potentially chronic health problem before they even begin kindergarten. The data pertaining to childhood obesity is undoubtedly alarming, but the good news is that obesity is preventable. Parents can provide nutritious foods for children and help them establish healthy eating habits at an early age, which could lay the foundation for a lifelong commitment to eating right.

One of the issues parents may encounter when planning kids' diets is foods that seem healthy but are actually hidden sources of sugar. That's a big problem, as Johns Hopkins Medicine notes that excess sugar consumption is associated with an elevated risk for cardiovascular disease. Sugar consumption has long been linked to obesity, which is one reason why the WHO recommended in 2015 that individuals get less than 10 percent of their daily calories from sugar. On the surface, it may seem simple for parents to heed that warning from the WHO. However, various foods and beverages, including ones kids typically love, are hidden sources of sugar. Identifying those foods and avoiding them or choosing versions that are not high in sugar can help kids maintain healthy weights.

- Cereals:** Parents may fondly recall overindulging in cereals with popular cartoon mascots on the box as kids. No matter how much nostalgia such memories may generate, parents must resist the temptation to recreate them for their own children. That's because many popular cereals marketed to children are loaded with sugar. However, even seemingly healthy cereals could be loaded with sugar. Read nutrition labels before buying cereal for kids. Johns Hopkins Medicine recommends choosing cereals with 10 to 12 grams or less of sugar per serving.

- Beverages:** Sugar-laden beverages like sodas, certain juices and even some flavored waters increase kids' risk of being overweight or obese. Encourage youngsters to drink more water and only serve sugary beverages on special occasions.
- Packaged fruits:** Here's another food that appears healthy on the surface but could be anything but. WebMD notes that a one-cup serving of mandarin oranges in light syrup contains right around 39 grams of sugar. Offer fresh fruit in lieu of packaged fruits.
- Sauces:** Many kids look forward to nights when pasta is the main

course at the dinner table. But even parents who serve whole grain pastas could be unknowingly serving up a sizable amount of sugar if

they aren't careful about which sauce they buy at the store. Some pasta sauces contain as much as 12 grams of sugar per half-cup serving. Barbe-

cue sauces also tend to be high in sugar, which underscores the importance of reading labels before serving up saucy meals. Childhood obesity is

preventable, especially when parents learn to identify hidden sources of sugar that could be putting kids' healthy in jeopardy.

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