



a newsletter for parents & families



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Computer Comfort: Keeping Healthy During This Season of Increased Computer Use

As students spend increasing hours at computers this month, finishing final papers and projects, ergonomic issues become even more important.

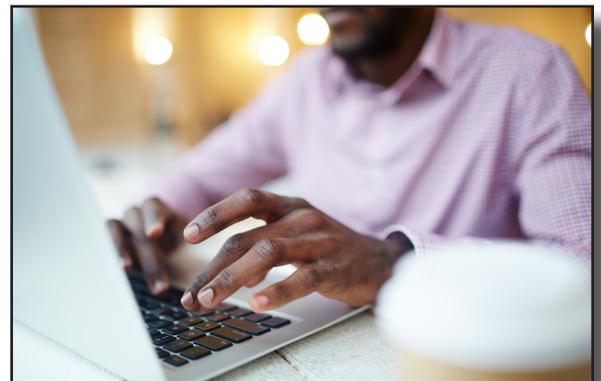
Here are a few things that you and your student can keep in mind to stay healthy when using technology...

- Make sure the top of your monitor is at or just below eye level
- Keep your head and neck balanced and in line with your torso
- Relax your shoulders
- Keep elbows close to your body and supported
- Support your lower back
- Have wrists and hands in line with your forearms
- Make adequate room for your keyboard and mouse
- Keep your feet flat on the floor

By getting into better ergonomic habits such as these, you and your student can continue emailing, typing and getting on social media without pain and discomfort. There's no need to contort your body in order to use the computer. Your body will thank you!

- For a detailed checklist that you can use to assess your computer workstation, go to: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/checklist.html>

Source: www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/computerworkstations/



Computer Vision Syndrome

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), nearly 80 percent of those working at a computer for more than two hours a day suffer from the symptoms of Computer Vision Syndrome (CVS). Symptoms include:

- Headaches
- Loss of focus
- Burning/tired eyes
- Double/blurred vision
- Neck and shoulder pains

So, be sure to take breaks every hour and step away from the computer. Blink intentionally, too, rather than staring for long periods of time. Your eyes need the break from this intensity and strain.





The Value of Informal Career Interviews

During winter break, your student has an excellent opportunity to gather career-related information by scheduling informal interviews. This is a perfect way to network, soak up some good learning experiences and make intentional efforts in the career planning arena!

For instance, if your student is interested in the field of communications, she can contact a local TV reporter, a radio producer, a public relations strategist and a print journalist to gather useful information. Or if

Tap Into Your Family/Friend Network

Does your cousin work with someone who might be able to talk with your student? Or do you have a friend that you bowl with who does related work? There are likely people in your own family/friend network who can talk with your student about career concerns. This can be a very good place to start!

Tap into Alumni

Encourage your student to connect with the campus alumni association to see if there is an alum in your hometown who might be willing to talk with him. Maybe he can shadow him at work or attend a business networking event. Many alums love to help!

biology is his thing, he can contact a hospital researcher, a health professional and a medical illustrator to ask some questions.

Encourage students to consider multiple angles when it comes to their fields of interest. Professionals in the career services office can help with this type of brainstorm.

And, then, once these areas have been identified, it's time for your student to reach out and schedule informational interviews. Some tips for students to consider include...

- **Give Identification.** Give your name, your school, your major and your year when making the initial reach-out effort.
- **Explain Purpose.** Briefly explain that you'd love to have half an hour of time to ask some career-related questions as you gather information about possible career paths.

- **Do It Early.** Rather than trying to get on a busy professional's schedule next week, reach out now to plan ahead. This shows respect for their time, as well as good organizational and planning skills.
- **Do Your Research.** Go online to find out about the company/organization that your interview subject works for so that you can ask targeted questions. Plus, this doesn't waste anyone's time!
- **Be Prepared.** Write down 5-10 thoughtful questions to ask your interview subject. Go in with paper and pen so you can take notes, too. This shows that you're serious and that you respect the time they're kindly sharing with you.

Then, dress neatly for the meeting, be on time, listen without interrupting and hold a professional conversation. Follow up with a thank you note to linger in the interviewee's mind.

Seasonal Student Issues

Here are a few things your student may be experiencing this month:

- Panic, fear and cramming as finals and paper deadlines approach
- High temper as stress mounts
- The realization that some friends may not be returning next semester
- Increased pressure to participate in sexual activity because extended separation is approaching
- Financial strain due to holiday gifts and travel costs
- Religious conflicts, as he/she gets ready to return home after a semester of gaining new perspectives
- Excitement/anxiety about returning home





Money-Making Ideas for Winter Break

As the holidays approach, students may be feeling financial pressure due to gift buying, travel costs and more. Help remove some of the strain by suggesting some simple money-making options to try during winter break...

- Doing odd jobs, like shoveling or painting, for neighbors in need of some help
- Giving language or music lessons
- Offering tutoring in a subject they excel at
- Providing sports lessons for kids (e.g. how to pitch, dribbling techniques, etc.)
- Taking on a seasonal job
- Selling some unnecessary belongings on eBay or Craigslist
- Baking goodies or serving at someone's holiday party
- Hosting an "arts and crafts night/day" during K-12 school break to give parents an opportunity to have a break, too

Reducing Financial Strain

Remind your student that catching up with friends doesn't always have to involve big money occasions like going out to eat or to the movies.

Having coffee at home, heading out to sing karaoke, walking dogs together at the animal shelter or going sledding can be just as fun!

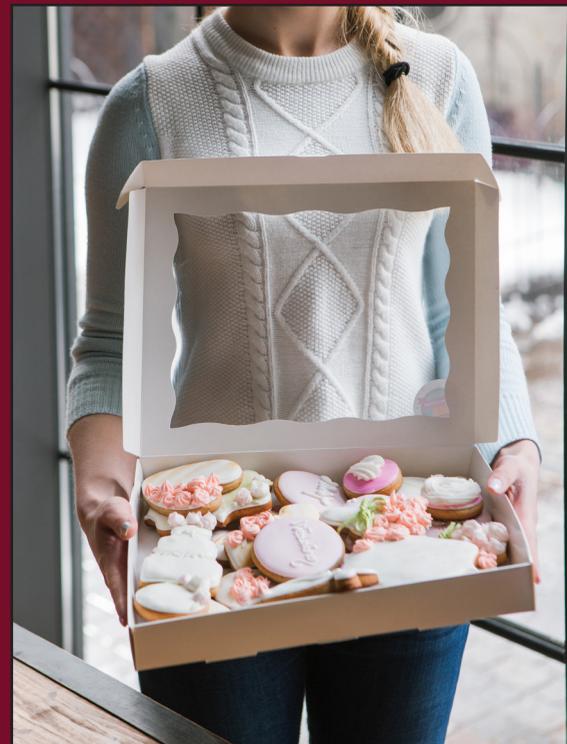


Holiday Giving with Your Student

What better way to spend time with your student than doing some good this holiday season? There are plentiful options...

- Make and deliver cookies to old teachers, along with a note about how college is going
- Help make and/or deliver holiday meals
- Donate old blankets and towels to local animal shelters
- Staff a gift-wrapping booth for an organization you believe in
- Adopt a family
- Head out with young friends, siblings, nieces/nephews to all pick out a toy to donate to Toys for Tots
- Do the same for a local book-collection drive, too
- Shovel out a neighbor
- Visit veterans at a local vet hospital
- Usher at a holiday concert
- Babysit for friends so the adults can get out to do some holiday errands

Who knows? An activity you try this year could become a lovely holiday tradition.





The Season of Sneezing

The last thing your student needs during this season is to get sick! So, here are some tips to share when it comes to preventing the onset of a cold...

Wash Your Hands – Often!

It's the single most effective way to keep from catching a cold or spreading one to someone else.

Cover Your Mouth and Nose When You Cough or Sneeze. The barrier helps keep germs contained. Try sneezing into your arm/elbow to keep the germs away from your hands, especially if hand-washing isn't immediately available.

Eat a Balanced Diet. A healthy diet includes plenty of fruits and vegetables, balanced with the other major food groups. Sometimes a daily vitamin can offer a good supplement to a diet.

Common Cold Symptoms

- A scratchy sore throat
- Sneezing
- Fatigue
- Nasal drainage
- Body aches
- A dry or productive cough

Get Sleep! Bodies need time to rest and recover – and to process all the information learned in a given day.

Move Around. Walk up the stairs instead of taking the elevator, go for a short jog, or crank out some sit-ups and push-ups as a study break.

Don't Let Stress Wear You Down. College is a stressful time, especially near final exams. Find ways to manage the stress productively.

Avoid Sharing with People Who Have Colds. This will greatly reduce the risk of catching a virus.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard your student works to maintain a healthy immune system, it's likely that she will contract a cold virus at one point or another. Therefore, in addition to being aware of healthy lifestyle strategies, she should be able to recognize primary cold and flu symptoms and know when to seek medical assistance.



Colds persisting longer than two weeks or students experiencing symptoms such as a sudden fever, prominent headache or earache, extreme fatigue, and severe aches and pains could indicate an infection of the respiratory system caused by the flu.

If your student sounds like he might be coming down with a cold or flu, encourage him to visit the campus health center at the first sign of symptoms. While a cold or flu might seem like no big deal, it can be on a college campus! Your student's defenses may be down due to stress and fatigue, making it more challenging to beat the bug, plus it's easier to infect others when living in such close quarters. Help is close by and ready to help your student feel much better!

The Loss of Friends

The end of the fall term inevitably means that some of your student's friends will be leaving for good. This can create a sense of loss that may be surprising to your student, as college friendships can often become very intense very quickly.

So, if your student talks about "So-and-so isn't coming back," try to engage with some simple queries...

- What did you like about him/her?
- What is he/she up to next?
- How does this feel to you?
- How do you plan to stay connected with him/her?