

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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## *still make the difference!*



## Use a school-year review to help your teen set new goals

**A**s the academic year draws to a close, it is helpful to review how it has gone with your teen. This review can serve as a benchmark when setting academic goals for next year.

Schedule time to discuss your teen's views on this past year. Here a few questions to help you get started:

- **Did you do as well** in classes as you had hoped you would?
- **Do you feel** that your grades reflect what you learned?
- **What was your favorite class** and why?
- **What was your least favorite class** and why?
- **Which teachers** did you have the best relationships with this year? Why was that?

Then, ask what your teen would like to improve. For example, would your student like to strengthen writing skills and earn a higher grade in English next year? Encourage your teen to come up with a list of goals to accomplish and write them down.

Next, work together to list the steps your teen will take to reach each goal. Is there anything your teen could do now? For example, could your teen take a writing class at a local community college to boost writing skills?

Whatever plan your teen comes up with, offer your support along the way. Knowing that you have high expectations can motivate your teen to work hard and reach goals.

## Discuss healthy relationships with your teen



Relationships matter to teenagers. However, some teens find themselves in abusive relationships.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in four teens reports verbal, emotional, physical or sexual dating violence each year. Those who experience dating violence in adolescence are at increased risk of partner violence in adulthood.

To promote healthy relationships, talk with your teen about the importance of respect. People in respectful relationships:

- **Can talk openly.** They aren't afraid to be direct and honest.
- **Work together** to make decisions. They also support and listen to each other.
- **Balance their time** between friends and family. A relationship where two people see no one but each other isn't healthy.
- **Feel free to be themselves.** People in a healthy relationship accept the other person's differences.

**Source:** *Fast Facts: Preventing Teen Dating Violence*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

# Planning helps high schoolers tackle summer assignments



Some high school classes require students to do an assignment over the summer. For summer schoolwork success,

remind your teen to:

- **Review the assignment** *before* the school year ends. That way your teen can get clarification if something is unclear.
- **Gather needed resources.** If students must read a book for the assignment, your teen should get it early. The library may run out of copies if your teen waits too long to check it out.
- **Get started early.** Some teens put off their assignments until the last few days of the summer. That usually leads to sleepless nights

and rushed work. Help your teen divide the assignment into parts and assign deadlines for each part. Your teen should plan to complete the assignment several weeks before school starts.

- **Put in effort.** First impressions matter. Say, “Doing your best on this assignment will help shape what next year’s teacher thinks of you.”

**“Productivity is never an accident. It is always the result of a commitment to excellence, intelligent planning, and focused effort.”**

—Paul J. Meyer

# Free learning apps can help students learn on the go



High schoolers use their phones to send text messages, post pictures and videos, check social media

and play games. Sometimes, they even use them to call people.

But smartphones can also be useful tools for learning. There are countless free apps that can help students:

- **Study a foreign language.** Many apps will help students in their foreign language courses. Some apps focus on vocabulary. Others help students learn challenging verb tenses and strengthen recall. Your teen should ask the teacher to recommend the best one.
- **Graph math problems** on the go. In upper-level math classes, students often use graphing calculators

to solve problems. There are apps that will also do the job. Now your teen will be able to solve equations on the phone.

- **Read Shakespeare.** Instead of lugging around a huge volume of Shakespeare’s works, your teen can download a particular title to read on the phone.
- **Brush up on geography.** There are even apps that can help your teen become familiar with the countries around the world.
- **Improve focus and memory.** Suggest your teen to look for apps that offer riddles, puzzles and brain teasers.
- **Manage time.** From to-do lists to digital calendars, many apps can help your teen keep track of schoolwork, activities and other responsibilities.

# Are you helping your teen get needed help?



The end of the year is near—but there is still time for students who are struggling to get help.

Are you doing all you can to identify issues and support your teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you recognize** the warning signs (failing grades, missed classes) that your teen may be having academic difficulties?

\_\_\_ **2. Have you helped** your teen identify the possible causes of a problem, such as not doing assignments, not listening to the teacher, not understanding the assignment?

\_\_\_ **3. Have you told** your teen that it’s a sign of strength to ask for help when it’s needed?

\_\_\_ **4. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk to teachers or a counselor about help available through the school?

\_\_\_ **5. Have you looked** into other resources if your teen needs more help than the school can provide?

## How well are you doing?

Each *yes* answer means you are helping your teen get the support to turn things around. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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# Exercise will keep your teen healthy over the summer



Many high schoolers plan to lie around all day, every day during summer break. Don't let your teen waste the summer this way!

Encourage your teen to do some kind of exercise every day. It doesn't take long for a habit to form—and daily exercise is a healthy habit to have.

Teens who exercise regularly:

- **Perform better academically.**
- **Are less likely** to become overweight.
- **Have stronger bones** and muscles.
- **Sleep better** than those who don't exercise regularly.
- **Have higher self-esteem.**
- **Are less stressed** and better able to handle problems.

- **Are less likely** to be depressed.
  - **Tend to grow** into healthy adults.
- The key is to make exercise fun. Your teen doesn't have to workout for hours every day. Splitting workout time into shorter bursts is much more realistic for most teens.

Your teen could walk around the neighborhood for 15 minutes in the morning and swim at a local pool for 30 minutes later in the day. Or, perhaps your teen would like to join a summer sports league with friends. Then they can experience the benefits of exercising their bodies and their social skills at the same time.

*Source:* I. Esteban-Cornejo and others, "Independent and Combined Influence of the Components of Physical Fitness on Academic Performance in Youth," *The Journal of Pediatrics*.

**Q:** My kids fight constantly and I always get caught in the middle. This is making me dread their summer break from school. How can I teach them to treat each other respectfully and resolve their conflicts peacefully?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** You aren't alone! Even the friendliest of siblings have times when they don't get along—and many parents feel like they have to be referees.

To avoid being in the middle of every squabble, teach your kids some basic strategies for resolving conflicts peacefully and respectfully. These strategies will also help them when they face conflicts at school.

Teach your kids to:

- **Talk about problems** *before* they become conflicts. When little things are ignored, they tend to grow into big disputes.
- **Use "I-messages."** Encourage your children to talk about their feelings, not the other person's mistakes. Instead of, "YOU always steal my clothes," try, "I feel upset when my stuff gets taken without my permission to borrow it."
- **Avoid the "blame game."** If there's a problem, it probably doesn't matter whose fault it is. Help your kids spend their time fixing the problem, not placing the blame.
- **Listen.** Your children will never understand another person's point of view if they don't listen to what that person has to say.
- **Cooperate and compromise.** If two people have a conflict, they each have a problem. To solve it, they'll probably both have to make some changes.

# Show your teen that learning is about more than grades



When families ask their kids about school, they are often most interested in grades. While that is a legitimate concern, the process of learning is just as important.

As the school year winds down, continue to show interest in what your high schooler is learning by asking questions about:

- **Accomplishments** in classes. How did your teen go about solving the most recent challenging math problems?
- **Recent tests.** Don't ask about the grade. Instead, ask if the test was an effective way to measure how well your teen knew the material. Why or why not?
- **Reading assignments.** Can your teen give you a summary of the plot? Does a passage remind your

teen of anything? Did your teen learn something new?

- **Working with classmates.** How did a recent group project turn out? Would your teen choose to work with those students again? Why or why not?
  - **Experiences** that changed your teen's perspective or thinking. For example, was there an interesting debate in a class? You may be able to share some of your own school experiences that had a similar effect on you.
- Questions like these show you are interested in what your teen is thinking. They also encourage your teen to think about the process of learning, and understand that learning is about far more than grades.

*Source:* "Grades vs Learning: Shifting Attention to What's Important," The Graide Network, The Chicago Literacy Alliance.



# It Matters: Summer Learning

## Investigate the benefits of summer school



Your teen may be looking forward to a summer job, or thinking about taking a break from school.

But there are several reasons your teen may want to consider summer school instead.

While summer school isn't for everyone, your teen may be able to:

1. **Gain credits** toward graduation. If your student failed a course, summer school provides an opportunity to take it again. Or, if your teen has been in classes for English language learners, taking a regular English class in the summer may be a great option.
  2. **Master a difficult subject.** If an upcoming science or math class is going to be a big challenge, taking it in the summer will give your teen more time to concentrate on it. This can be a great option for students who want to make sure they earn good grades for college admission.
  3. **Free up space** for an art or music class. During the regular school year, a student in a demanding academic program may not have room for music or art. Taking a required class in the summer will allow your teen to include these enriching classes in the regular school-year schedule.
- If your teen decides to take a class over the summer, discuss the importance of keeping up with assignments. Because summer classes are taught in such a short time period, missing even one day's work can make it hard to catch up.

## Studies show summer reading improves student achievement

Research shows that high school students strongly benefit from reading over the summer. To encourage summer reading:

- **Challenge your teen** to read at least four books. One study found that the more books students read during the summer, the bigger their academic gains.
- **Ask your teen** to teach you new words. Students who read one million words a year add at least one thousand words to their vocabularies.
- **Go to the library** often with your teen to refresh your reading supply. Students who use the library over the summer are more likely to read regularly than those who do not.
- **Suggest your teen** ask friends about books they have enjoyed



and what they liked about them. Recommendations from peers are likely more tempting than ones from adults.

Source: *Kids and Family Reading Report: The Summer Reading Imperative*, Scholastic.

## A part-time job can reinforce skills for school success



A summer job is often a teen's first step into the workforce. Summer work helps teens prepare for the demands and responsibilities of the real world. It can also teach them many valuable lessons about responsibility, time management and respect—important ingredients for school success.

A summer job can help your teen learn how to:

- **Be accountable.** An employer will depend on your teen to show up when expected and to perform all job duties in a timely way. This helps your teen be responsible and develop a work ethic.
- **Be respectful.** Many entry-level jobs involve working with the public. Your teen will need to be polite and helpful to all kinds of people—even those who may not show the same respect.
- **Think about the future.** Part-time jobs help teens figure out what type of work they may want to do in the future.
- **Work with others.** Your teen will have to get along with coworkers and take direction from a supervisor.