

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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*still make the difference!*



## Use five strategies to set your teen up for school success

**W**hether it's your teen's first year in high school or the last, there are five simple things you can do to set the stage for a successful school year. Take time to:

**1. Meet with your teen's teachers.**

Do this at back-to-school night or schedule an appointment. Opening lines of communication early will make it easier for you to work together if a problem arises.

**2. Write down the names and**

email addresses of your teen's teachers. Also write down contact information for the principal, the attendance office and your teen's school counselor. Keep the information handy for easy access throughout the year. Follow the school on social media, too.

**3. Plan to attend** the school events that involve your teen. You'll have fun, you'll show that you care about your teen and the school, and you'll get to meet other families. These contacts will be useful when your teen tells you things like "Seniors don't have to go to school today."

**4. Make it clear** that there will be a study time at home every day. Your teen can decide *when* to do assignments, but not *whether* to do them. No assignments? Your teen can read or review class notes.

**5. Check with the counselor** to make sure your teen is on track to graduate and be admitted to college or a career-training program after graduation. Taking rigorous classes now gives your teen options later.

## Checklists can help your teen stay organized



Before an airplane takes off, the pilot runs through a checklist to make sure everything

is ready. Even pilots who have flown thousands of flights still go through their checklists every time they fly.

Encourage your teen to run through these mental checklists throughout the day:

- **In the morning.** What do I need for school? Book bag, assignment, lunch, gym shoes, a signed note.
- **Before class.** What do I need for my first class? Textbook, assignment, pencil, paper.
- **In class.** What are the assignments for tomorrow? Do I understand them? Are there long-term projects? When are they due?
- **Before leaving school.** What materials do I need to bring home to complete all of my assignments?
- **At home.** What are my school-work priorities? Which tasks are most important? Due first?
- **Before bed.** What do I need for school tomorrow? Have I placed all items by the door?

# Make school attendance a top priority for your high schooler



One of the best ways to support learning is to make sure your teen attends school every day on time. Attendance is vital for academic success.

Teens who miss school frequently are more likely to:

- **Drop out.** Missing too many classes is often the first sign that a teen is giving up on school.
- **Get into trouble.** One study found that 78 percent of people who ended up in prison had a first arrest for school truancy.

The beginning of the school year is a time to develop positive habits. To make school attendance a priority:

- **Talk to your teen** about the importance of attendance and punctuality. If you didn't show up to your job, you'd get fired. Let your teen know

that attending school is just as important.

- **Avoid scheduling medical** and other appointments for your teen during school hours.
- **Establish routines** at home that make getting to school on time easier. And talk with your teen about school every day.
- **Connect with the teacher.** When an absence is unavoidable, talk to the teacher about the best ways to support your teen's learning.

Source: "What's the Link Between Truancy and Delinquency?" San Bernardino County District Attorney.

**"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."**

—Nelson Mandela

# Ask yourself these questions when setting rules for your teen



As teens grow older, they outgrow certain rules. But they aren't adults yet, and some limits still apply. The key to setting effective

rules for teens is balance. Teens need independence but adults still need to keep some control.

Rules will be different for each family, but considering some general questions will help you set yours effectively:

- **Has my teen had** a chance to talk about this rule with me? Teenagers should have input about rules, although adults should always make the final decision.
- **Will this rule help** my teen develop independence? Teens need to learn how to think for themselves. They

need a chance to make choices and live with them. But they can't handle *every* choice. By high school, teens can decide when and in what order to do assignments, but not whether or not they have to do them.

- **Am I setting an example** by following this rule? If you don't wear your seat belt when driving in a car, you shouldn't be surprised to discover your teen isn't wearing one when driving with friends.
- **Does my teen understand** the consequences of breaking a rule? For the most impact, consequences should directly relate to the misbehavior and be agreed upon beforehand. For instance, being late for curfew could mean an earlier curfew the following weekend.

# Are you teaching your teen school success strategies?



Teachers teach students how to write an essay and how to solve for  $x$ . But families have lessons to teach that are just as

important to students' high school success. Are you teaching your teen these important things? Answer yes or no to each question below to find out:

\_\_\_ **1. Have you made sure** that both you and your teen understand and follow school rules?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you help** your teen use time wisely by recommending tools such as planners, calendars and daily to-do lists?

\_\_\_ **3. Have you talked** with your teen about the importance of work ethic and always giving your best effort?

\_\_\_ **4. Have you discussed** negative peer pressure and role-played ways to resist it with your teen?

\_\_\_ **5. Have you talked** with your teen about the importance of seeking help from teachers right away when facing academic challenges?

**How well are you doing?**

If most of your answers were *yes*, you are setting your teen up for success. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Coaching can help your high schooler make better decisions



Ever watch how a coach teaches an athlete a new skill? Generally, the coach breaks the skill down into smaller parts, then lets the athlete practice them until the skill is mastered.

This same approach works for teaching teens how to make better decisions. Coach your teen to:

1. **Define the issue.** What is it your teen needs to do or decide? What does your student already know about this issue?
2. **Gather information.** Before making a decision about an unfamiliar situation, seeking relevant information will help your teen make a wise choice.
3. **List all the alternatives.** Not all decisions are either-or choices. There may be many possibilities.
4. **Think about consequences.** Have your teen write one choice at the top of a piece of paper, then draw a line down the middle. On the left side of the paper, your teen should write the positive consequences from that decision. Negative consequences go on the right side.
5. **Consider feelings and values.** Sometimes, the best decision on paper may not feel right. Teens need to think about their values as they make a choice.
6. **Choose the best course of action.** Although it's hard to let go of this part of the decision-making process, it's the most important step to turn over to your teen. If your teen makes a wise choice, offer praise. If your teen makes a poor choice, talk about how to make a better one next time.

## Share tips for helping your teen stay awake during study time



It's a common struggle: Teens sit down to start studying and their eyelids start to droop. The reality is, many high school students find themselves battling sleepiness while trying to study.

But don't worry. Several strategies can help fight off the urge to doze. Share these with your teen:

- **Get enough sleep** on a regular basis. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, teens need between eight and 10 hours of sleep every 24 hours.
- **Don't get too much sleep!** Too much sleep can make your teen just as groggy as too little.
- **Take frequent breaks.** One five- to 10-minute break after every hour of studying will keep your teen awake and focused. During breaks, your teen can pace across the room, take a fast shower or do some stretching exercises.
- **Don't get too comfortable.** If your teen is too relaxed, it will be easier to doze off.
- **Focus on posture.** Sitting up straight or standing up while studying can help your teen stay alert.
- **Exercise regularly.** Active teens sleep better at night and have more energy during the day.
- **Drink plenty of water** to avoid dehydration.
- **Eat a healthy snack** to keep blood sugar stable.
- **Study with a friend** or in a group.
- **Alternate tasks** to keep things interesting.

**Q:** Now that my teen is in high school, I am wondering how much monitoring I should do when it comes to recreational activities. Should I track my teen's location using my phone? Should I read my teen's text messages? How much is too much?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** There are many tools available to families these days to help them monitor teens. But it's important to remember one thing—and that's the fine line between keeping your teen safe and spying.

Your goal should be to respect your teen's privacy as much you can while promoting safety. To help your teen steer clear of trouble:

- **Build a network.** Get to know the families of your teen's friends, and discuss concerns about alcohol, vaping and drug use. Before you allow your teen to go to a party, check to see if a responsible adult will be present.
- **Set rules about driving** a car—and about riding in cars. Make sure your teen knows *never* to get in the car with someone who has been drinking. Say, "If you are ever in that situation, call me and I will pick you up—no questions asked."
- **Monitor social media posts.** Make it clear that your teen should not post things that aren't OK for the whole world to see—including you.
- **Talk with your teen.** Spend time alone together—go out for ice cream, take a walk or do something else you both enjoy. One-on-one talks will help you build a strong relationship. And in the long run, that will work far better than spying on your teen!



# It Matters: Schoolwork

## Discuss academic integrity with your teenager



The research is in on students and cheating, and the news is sobering. In a nationwide survey of 43,000 second-

ary students, 59 percent admitted to cheating on tests and assignments.

Studies also show that:

- **Above-average students** are just as likely to cheat as their lower-achieving peers.
- **Cheating doesn't carry** much of a stigma anymore. Students don't feel the shame in it that they once did.
- **The more pressure** students feel to earn higher grades, the more likely they are to cheat.
- **Cheaters often justify** their actions by claiming that "everyone's doing it." In their minds, they'll be at a disadvantage if they don't cheat.
- **Cheating is easier** than ever, thanks to the technology. Students can download entire papers or projects online.

Let your teen know you expect honesty at home and in class. Remind your student that cheating includes:

- **Copying assignments** from another student.
- **Sharing questions and answers** during or after a test.
- **Using materials or devices** during tests or assignments that are not allowed by the teacher.
- **Copying words and ideas** from other people or AI without giving the source.
- **Handing in a project** or paper that was completed by someone else.

Source: *Plagiarism: Facts & Stats: Academic Integrity in High School*, Plagiarism.org.

## Help your teen get a jump start on schoolwork in 10 minutes

**W**hen high schoolers do a little work in advance, assignments seem like less of a chore. In just 10 minutes of spare time, students can get a head start on their workload.

Encourage your teen to take advantage of small amounts of time to:

- **Learn** three new vocabulary words for English or a foreign language.
- **Skim** the next chapter in assigned reading.
- **Complete** one or two math or science problems.
- **Review** a few of the new terms that will be introduced in the next math or science lesson.
- **Find** one or two sources for an upcoming paper or project.



- **Review notes** from each of that day's classes.

Source: R. Dellabough, *101 Ways to Get Straight A's*, Troll Communication.

## Writing down tasks keeps high school students focused



Teens can be easily distracted—and that's very obvious when they sit down to study. But writing tasks down can motivate them to get to work faster and stay focused longer.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Make daily to-do lists.** Your teen should write down everything that needs to be completed that day. Then, it's time to create a schedule. Remind your teen to include one five- to 10-minute break after each hour of studying.
- **Use a weekly planner** to write down activities for the upcoming week—classes, appointments,

practices, family dinners, etc.

Then, your teen should fill in study time. Seeing the specific tasks that need completion before Friday night's outing will give your teen the incentive to stay on schedule and get everything done.

- **Use a monthly calendar** to plan for long-term projects. Your teen can break down long-term assignments into shorter steps and give each step a due date. Big projects don't seem as intimidating when there's a clear plan of smaller, more manageable tasks to complete. A written plan will help your student stay on track and complete the whole project on time.