High School Parents®
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# Academic achievement and wellness go hand in hand

True school success goes beyond a report card. And it is built on a foundation of overall wellness. When teens learn to prioritize their well-being alongside their studies, they are better equipped to stay engaged, manage pressure and handle the challenges of the school year.

To set your teen up for success:

- **Offer a sense of control.** Let your teen handle schoolwork and responsibilities. Your support is vital, but avoid micromanaging.
- **Promote healthy habits.** Ensure your teen gets enough sleep, eats well and stays active. These basics are key to a sharp mind.
- **Encourage connection.** Remind your teen to connect with teachers and peers. Strong relationships are essential for growth and happiness.
- **Talk about self-care.** Suggest your teen set aside 20 minutes daily to relax. Whether it is drawing or journaling, downtime is necessary for recharging.
- **Suggest a digital detox.** Recommend your teen turn off devices for a few hours each day. A break from social media helps your teen focus and lowers anxiety.
- **Celebrate small wins.** Acknowledge your teen's effort and progress. Focus on achievements and strengths to build the confidence your teen needs to tackle bigger challenges.
- **Reach out for help.** If you have concerns about your teen's emotional or physical health, contact your family pediatrician or a school counselor, who can suggest ways to get help.

## Demonstrate how to work with teachers

Sooner or later, every student encounters a "tough" teacher. While it can be frustrating, these moments are perfect opportunities to help your teen develop important life skills.

To support your teen:

- **Explain the bigger picture.** Your teen will have to work with all types of people throughout life.
- **Set clear goals.** Discuss what your teen wants to achieve in the class.
- **Brainstorm solutions.** Work together to find ways your teen can improve the relationship. Encourage asking the teacher directly for effective ways to learn the material.
- **Build confidence.** Say that you believe in your teen's hard work and ability to succeed.
- **Seek extra help.** If problems continue, your teen should speak with a school counselor.

By guiding your teen through these challenges, you are demonstrating how to handle difficult situations in a constructive and successful way.

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# Consistency is essential when it comes to enforcing the rules

High school students pay close attention to how the adults in their lives treat them, especially when it comes to discipline. Teenagers need clear, consistent messages that show authority figures are serious and will follow through on their words.

Follow these guidelines to reinforce respect for rules:

- **Present a united front.** If you are parenting with another caregiver, agree on the rules and consequences together. Being on the same page prevents your teen from playing one of you against the other.
- **Set expectations with others.** Before your teen visits relatives, neighbors or friends, discuss your house rules with them. For example, if your teen must be home by a certain time on weekends, make sure those adults know the rule applies no matter where your teen is staying.
- **Support school policies.** Help your teen stay on track by supporting school expectations. Make sure both you and your teen understand teacher policies for tests, assignments and late work. Expect your high schooler to follow these rules and contact the teacher directly if you have any questions or concerns.

**"Loving a child doesn't mean giving in to all his whims; to love him is to bring out the best in him, to teach him to love what is difficult."**

*— Nadia Boulanger*

# Remind your teen of test-taking tips that work for all types of tests

Whether it is a big driving test or a short math quiz, tests are a normal part of life for high school students. While each test is different, there are some simple strategies that will help your teen succeed on any of them.

When taking a test, remind your teen to:

- **Read instructions twice.** Your teen should read the directions carefully to know exactly what to do.
- **Look for key words** that indicate how to answer, such as *compare, list, describe, define* and *summarize.*
- **Preview the test questions** before starting. This helps your teen decide how much time to spend on each part.
- **Think before choosing.** Your teen should read each question carefully and try to think of the answer before looking at the choices provided.
- **Skip and return.** If a question is too hard, your teen should skip it. Have your teen answer all the easy questions first if possible, then go back to the others.
- **Stay calm.** If your teen feels stressed, suggest taking a few slow, deep breaths to help with focus.
- **Check work.** Save time at the end to review. Did your teen answer every question? Do the answers make sense? Are the sentences complete?

# Are you helping your teen avoid the senior slump?

Ask any teacher and you'll learn that "senior slump" affects many seniors. They don't want to study. They have a hard time paying attention in class. In fact, many don't want to attend class at all!

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen avoid the senior slump:

1. **Have you talked** with your teen about why it's important to keep grades up? Colleges can take back their offers of admission.
2. **Are you making sure** your teen is attending every class every day?
3. **Have you planned** some fun senior activities with other families that will give your teen a reason to want to stay involved in school?
4. **Are you helping** your teen find work experiences—such as interning and volunteering?
5. **Are you spending** time together and remaining engaged in what your teen is learning?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you're helping your teen stay focused during senior year. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.

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# Support your teen's growing ability to think and analyze

As students get older, they learn to think in more complex ways. High school students have begun to develop:

- **Advanced reasoning skills.** They are able to think about multiple possibilities and hypothetical situations.
- **Abstract thinking skills.** They can think about intangible concepts, such as *integrity*.
- **The ability to think about thinking.** This allows students to consider how they are processing what they are learning and feeling.

Changes in thought processes are often displayed in typical teen behavior, such as the belief that "no one" understands them. Teens also tend to become more concerned with the world around them. They may start supporting a cause or begin noticing differences between adults' words and actions.

To support your teen's advancing thinking skills:

- **Listen to concerns.** Try not to be offended if your teen says you don't understand. Instead, enlist the help of an older sibling or family friend, and suggest that your teen turn to that person for advice.
- **Listen to ideas.** Encourage your teen to offer opinions on family rules and consequences.
- **Discuss your teen's views** of the world—and talk about your own. Ask about political ideas and personal values. If you disagree, say so without criticizing your teen personally.
- **Encourage involvement** in causes your teen feels strongly about.

# Show your high school student how to take effective notes

Developing an effective note-taking strategy helps students get the most out of their classes. Share these tips with your teen:

- **Create a structure.** For example, suggest drawing a vertical line down a sheet of paper and dividing it into two columns of about one-third and two-thirds of the page. Your student should take class notes in the wider column.
- **Take notes by hand.** Studies show that writing notes by hand helps students process information better than keyboarding.
- **Create a list of abbreviations.** Teachers can talk faster than students can write. So using abbreviations will help your teen keep up. Try *b/c* for *because* and *ex.* for *example.*
- **Review notes after each class.** While rereading notes, your teen can jot down questions or quick summaries in the narrow column. Your teen can also add any extra explanations that will help when it's time to study for the test.
- **Supplement notes with** information from other resources. An assigned reading or a teacher-recommended website may expand on a subject.
- **Use a color-coding system** to identify key ideas and connect related concepts and details. When it's time to review for the test, your teen can use the notes to create test questions and answer them.

## Questions & Answers

**Q: My high schooler tends to put things off. If there is a big paper due, my teen waits until the night before—sometimes, until very late on the night before. How can I help my teen break the procrastination habit before it starts to affect grades?**

**A:** Most high school students put things off at one time or another. But some teens are regular procrastinators. In addition to driving their families crazy, these teens end up creating a lot of unnecessary stress. As a result, they usually don't perform as well academically as they could.

To help your teen break the procrastination habit:

- **Talk about it.** Ask your teen, "Why do you think you put things off? Are you afraid of failing? Do you like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute? Or, are you just unmotivated?" Whatever the cause, let your teen know that this habit needs to change to reduce stress.
- **Demonstrate how to divide** large projects into smaller pieces and set deadlines for each piece. After completing a step, your teen may find the work less intimidating and keep going.
- **Suggest rewards.** After finishing a task, your teen should do something enjoyable for a few minutes as a reward.
- **Encourage positive self-talk.** Saying things like, "I can get this done now so I can relax later," is much more motivating than worrying about the deadline.
- **Focus on the future**. Remind your teen that learning to manage time now will pay off significantly throughout high school and beyond.

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# It Matters: Schoolwork

## A variety of resources makes research stronger

Research is a vital skill for every high schooler. By now, students need to do more than just find quick answers; they need to learn how to investigate topics in greater depth.

While the internet and library are great starting points, encourage your teen to look beyond them for major projects. Using a variety of resources builds problem-solving, interviewing and creative thinking skills. Mastering research techniques will prepare your teen for the challenges of college and the modern workplace.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Read professional articles** that have been published on the topic and check the sources mentioned. Your teen could even contact a reporter—many are happy to share insights or point students toward helpful contacts.
- **Connect with experts.** Suggest that your teen email or call someone who works in that field. Experts can be found by searching online or calling the public affairs offices at local universities or businesses.
- **Create a short survey.** Asking people a few questions about the topic and including those results in the paper adds a personal touch to your teen's research.
- **Talk with school staff.** Once your teen has gathered some information, suggest chatting with teachers or the librarian. They can suggest books or articles that offer different viewpoints to help round out your teen's research.

## Help your teenager overcome common schoolwork hurdles

Helping students with schoolwork doesn't mean doing it for them. Instead, it means giving them the support to succeed on their own.

Is your high schooler struggling? Try these tips:

- **Missing or late assignments?** Make it clear that schoolwork comes first. Suggest your teen create a daily to-do list. Checking off finished tasks gives teens a sense of accomplishment.
- **Lacking motivation?** Talk about future goals and how current classes can help your teen reach those dreams. Remind your teen that fun activities like gaming or hanging out with friends can only happen after schoolwork is finished.
- **Confused by assignments?** If your teen doesn't understand the directions, suggest asking a classmate for help or reaching out to the teacher for an explanation.

- **Worried about the workload?** If your teen is doing well, the amount of work is likely just right. However, if your teen is spending all night on homework—or has almost no work but is struggling in class—it is time to talk to the teacher. A quick email or meeting can help you and your teen figure out the best path forward.

## Students benefit when they assess the quality of their work

Successful students understand the value of reviewing their work before turning it in. By taking an objective look at the quality of their own work, teens take a step toward becoming independent learners who are more likely to learn more and earn better grades.

Here are six questions your teen should ask before turning in a school assignment:

1. **Does this meet** the requirements my teacher laid out?
2. **Am I satisfied** with what I am turning in?
3. **Have I given** proper credit to others whose work I used?
4. **Have I checked** for misspellings and careless errors?
5. **Is there anything** that I can improve?
6. **What have I learned** from this assignment?