

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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West Lowndes High School

*still make the difference!*



## Physical activity can reduce stress and boost achievement

As students try to make up for lost learning time due to the pandemic, many are facing high levels of stress—which has a negative effect on student achievement. That means that no matter how much they have studied or prepared, if students show up to classes stressed-out, they can't give learning their best effort.

One effective way to help your teen decrease stress is to promote daily physical activity. Here's why. Exercise:

- **Helps students feel happier.** The endorphins exercise releases also increase energy levels. Stuck on a math problem? Skateboarding around the block might help your teen return to the task energized.
- **Is calming.** When people are focused on the exercise or sport

at hand, they are likely to stop focusing on their worries.

- **Increases self-confidence.** When teenagers feel like they have more control over their bodies, it can make them feel more in control of their studies as well.
- **Improves memory.** Studies have shown that exercise stimulates brain connectivity, allowing it to form and retain long-term memories.

If your high schooler “doesn't have time” to exercise, talk about simple ways to fit some activity into the day. You could even plan to work out together—you could probably use the reduction in stress as much as your teenager!

Source: “Exercise and stress: Get moving to manage stress,” Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research.

## Teach your teen how to stand up to pressure



Negative peer pressure can decrease students' self-confidence and lead to poor

academic performance and increased anxiety. Unfortunately, simply saying *no* doesn't always fend off negative peer pressure. Arm your teen with a variety of ways to respond.

Your teen could:

- **Offer personal reasons:** “I'm working hard to make the varsity team. I don't want to screw that up.”
- **Talk about consequences.** “Sorry, the last person who got caught skipping school was suspended. I can't risk that.”
- **Be dismissive.** Your teen could make a face and walk away.
- **Blame a parent.** “If my dad finds out, he will freak out.”
- **Suggest something else.** “I was planning to see a movie. Want to come with me instead of going to that party?”
- **Stay away.** Someone who repeatedly tries to get your teen into trouble is no friend at all. Suggest that your teen consider avoiding the person, at least for the time being.

# High school students still need quality time with their families



Before kids can drive, they *have* to spend time with their families. They need rides to friends' houses, sports practices and other activities.

But once kids can drive—or can find friends who can get them places—time spent with family often decreases. However, teens need their family's approval, attention and time more than ever.

Spending quality time with your teen boosts confidence, reduces risky behavior and promotes school success. To spend more time together:

- **Talk to your teen about school.** Show interest in classes and ask questions. Ask your teen to teach you something from a class.
- **Plan a family meal together.** Talk about the kinds of food you might like to try. Divide responsibilities.

You'll get a great meal and a great conversation.

- **Read together.** Choose a book that you'll both enjoy reading and set aside time to discuss it.
- **Work on a project.** Does a room or closet need organizing? With your teen, brainstorm a plan of attack.
- **Ask your teen** to help you plan a family outing. Teens like to give their input and are more invested in activities that they help plan.
- **Schedule a family game night.** Let your teen invite a friend over to participate. As a bonus, you'll get to know the friend a bit better!

**“No amount of money or success can take the place of time spent with your family.”**

—Unknown

# Tips for helping teenagers stay awake during study time



Many high school students report that they sometimes fall asleep while studying. Here are some tips you can give your teen to fight off the urge to doze:

- **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.

# Are you teaching your teen skills for school success?



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 skills for school success? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

\_\_\_ **1. Have you discussed** with your teen the importance of attendance and getting to school on time?

\_\_\_ **2. Have you made sure** that both you and your teen understand and follow school rules?

\_\_\_ **3. Have you talked** with your teen about negative peer pressure and role-played ways to respond? (See the article on page one.)

\_\_\_ **4. Do you help** your teen use time wisely by recommending tools such as planners, calendars and daily to-do lists?

\_\_\_ **5. Have you talked** with your teen about the importance of work ethic and always giving your best effort?

**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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# Give your teen six strategies for taking better class notes



Why do some students do better in school than others? One reason may be that they take notes.

When students take notes, they're also paying closer attention to what they hear in class. That makes it easier for them to learn the material.

Here are some note-taking tips to share with your teen:

- 1. Listen for the main ideas.** Anything the teacher repeats more than once or writes on the board should go in your teen's notes. Your teen should also write down any words that the teacher defines.
- 2. Keep it brief.** Your teen should use phrases and words instead of complete sentences. Recommend creating a system of abbreviations and symbols. Suggest your teen keep a list of them.
- 3. Leave some blank spaces.** This allows your teen to add comments or questions later.
- 4. Place a mark** next to unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts. This reminds your teen to look them up later.
- 5. Use colors and shapes.** Your teen can draw a circle or box around the most important idea. Some students find it helpful to use colored markers to show how ideas relate.
- 6. Review the notes** each evening. Your teen will be better able to fix any mistakes and fill in something missed. Daily review will also help your teen remember the information at test time.

# Maximize learning by sharing memory-boosting strategies



Memory skills, especially long-term memory skills, are critical for learning. Long-term memory is the "store of knowledge"

we draw on all our lives.

To help your teen boost memory power, share these tips:

- **Look at the big picture.** If there is an upcoming test on Chapter Four, your teen will want to spend the most time studying that chapter. However, your teen should also take a few moments to look at the summaries of other chapters. Doing so will illustrate how Chapter Four relates to the whole unit. Understanding the relationship will improve your teen's memory.
- **Put information** on index cards and review the cards frequently. This tried-and-true method really does make recalling small chunks of information easier.
- **Focus attention** on the middle part of material, because brains remember the beginning and end parts best.
- **Make the material relevant.** Perhaps your teen can visit a historic site or watch a YouTube video about the subject.
- **Use mnemonics**, such as acronyms. Techniques like remembering GEMDAS for the order of math operations can help students recall information.
- **Study and then rest** or sleep. The brain is never asleep. While your teen's body is getting much needed rest, the brain will still be working on sorting out and retaining the material studied just before going to bed.

**Q:** My ninth grader is signing up for classes for next year. I want to discuss the course options, but my teen doesn't want me to be involved. Should I just let my teen pick courses independently?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Parents and teens fight many battles over independence. Sometimes, teens need to win—but planning next year's academic schedule is not one of those times.

The choices students make now will affect their future. Everything from where they will go to college (or *if* they will go to college) to the careers they may pursue can be affected by the courses students take in high school.

While teens may be tempted to take only the classes required for high school graduation, make sure you and your student are aware of basic college admission requirements. For example, most colleges require high school graduates to have taken at least:

- **Four years** of English.
- **Three years** of math.
- **Three years** of science.
- **Two years** of social studies/history.
- **Two years** of a single foreign language.
- **One year** of the arts.

While many students may not be thinking about college, they still need to keep their eyes on the future. The classes they take now will directly affect their options after graduation.

Schedule a meeting with your teen and the school counselor. Together, lay out a plan for the next three years. Your teen may complain now, but you'll both be glad after graduation when there are lots of great choices for your teen's future.

# It Matters: Test Success

## Teach your teen this five-day study program



A simple study program can help high school students study for all kinds of tests—from history unit tests to

math final exams.

Encourage your teen to follow these steps:

- **Four days before the test**, gather everything that will be covered on the test. This includes class notes, outlines, quizzes and handouts. Arrange them by date.
- **Three days before the test**, read everything over. Make a list of facts likely to be on the test. Did the teacher spend four days going over the parts of a cell? Odds are, that will show up on test day. Make flash cards of facts to memorize, or create a quiz and practice recalling the information. (Visit [quizlet.com](https://quizlet.com) for free online study tools.)
- **Two days before the test**, look through assigned readings. What are the major titles? What are the most important topics? Make a list of essay questions that may show up on the test. Now, choose several of these possible test questions and make notes of how to answer them.
- **One day before the test**, create and take a self-quiz. Try to recall and write memorized facts correctly. Apply math or science formulas by using them to solve sample problems.
- **The day of the test**, repeat the previous day's tasks. Collect and bring all allowed materials (notes, calculators, etc.) to class.

## Help your high schooler prepare physically for tests

In addition to studying over several days for a test, high school students need to prepare physically. Encourage your teen to:

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Brains work best when they are well-rested. Make sure your teen gets at least eight hours of sleep the night before a test.
- **Set an alarm clock.** Your teen might set a backup alarm, too—to avoid oversleeping.
- **Dress comfortably.** Sometimes, classrooms are too hot or too cold, so your teen should dress in layers.
- **Eat breakfast.** Food fuels the body and mind, giving your teen energy to focus. Your teen should avoid a big meal, however, which could lead to sleepiness.



- **Show up early.** Students should allow at least five minutes before the test begins to get settled. Your teen can get out necessary supplies and take a few deep breaths.

## Four proven strategies help reduce students' test anxiety



Does your teen's stomach do flip-flops at the thought of a big test? Although you can't take the test for your teen, there are lots of ways to offer support. To reduce test anxiety:

1. **Chat with your teen.** Ask questions such as, "Why do you think you are so nervous about the test? Is the material too hard? Do you not understand it?" Sometimes just talking things out can make the test seem less scary.
2. **Help your teen make** a study schedule, setting aside study time on each of the days leading up to it. (Check out the five-day study plan to the left.)
3. **Create a comfy study spot.** Carve out a quiet, well-lit place at home designated for studying. Encourage your teen to gather all needed supplies *before* sitting down to study—including a healthy snack and a glass of water. Reduce distractions and limit interruptions.
4. **Remind your teen of strengths.** "I know you're worried about the big science test, but remember how well you did on the last one? Apply that same effort and I know you will be successful!"