

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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## Support high school learning with these simple strategies

In middle school, it was probably fairly easy to understand what your child was learning and help with school assignments. However, now that your child is in high school, you face two challenges:

1. **Development.** Teens are often less likely to talk about classes and what they are learning in school than they were when they were younger.
2. **Advanced classes.** It can be difficult for families to understand, let alone help, with complicated assignments. Remaining engaged in your teen's education supports learning. But how can you do it? You can:

- **Ask about learning every day.** Who is your teen's favorite teacher? Which class does your teen find the most interesting?

- **Maintain high expectations.** One-third of high school students say their families have no idea how they are doing in school. Check on your teen's progress and say you expect your teen's best effort.
- **Attend school events.** This helps you meet other families, build a relationship with school staff and demonstrate to your teen that education is important to you.
- **Be aware of schedules** for tests, assignments and projects. Even if you don't understand the subject matter, saying, "Isn't your calculus test tomorrow?" reminds your teen that you are paying attention.

Source: S. Blaney, *Please Stop the Roller Coaster!: How Parents of Teenagers Can Smooth Out the Ride*, ChangeWorks Publishing.

## Discuss the hidden risks of skipping class



Many high school students think skipping a class isn't a big deal. However, studies show that

students who skip classes:

- **Fall behind** because they no longer understand the topics being taught.
- **Feel disconnected** from school.
- **Are more likely** to consider dropping out of high school.
- **Are less likely** to enroll in higher education.

Insist your teen attend every class, every day. Be sure to:

- **Make attendance** a priority in your family. Talk to your teen about why it is important. Schedule appointments and trips outside of school hours.
- **Contact the teacher** if you suspect your teen may be skipping a class. When teens know families will check up on them, they are more likely to stay in school.
- **Remind your teen** that regular attendance helps students maintain strong relationships with peers and teachers.

Source: *Preventing Missed Opportunity: Taking Collective Action to Confront Chronic Absence*, Attendance Works.

# Give your teen responsibility for developing healthy habits



Students can't learn if they are too groggy to concentrate. That's why establishing healthy habits is crucial to teens'

success in school. A commitment to nutrition, exercise and sleep will help teens start each school day ready to learn. Encourage your teen to:

- 1. Eat healthy** and well-balanced meals and snacks. Teens benefit from nutritious foods such as produce, lean protein and whole grains. Help your teen make time for breakfast every day, even if it is a granola bar or piece of toast in one hand and a banana in the other.
- 2. Get regular exercise.** A strong body, fueled by regular physical activity, will help your teen stay alert during the school day. Recommend doing some sort of exercise every day.

Even a short walk after classes end can reduce stress and help your teen be ready to study and tackle assignments.

- 3. Get a good night's sleep.** Your teen needs plenty of rest in order to function properly throughout the school day. According to the Centers for Disease Control, teens need 8-10 hours of sleep each 24-hour period.

Source: K.T. Alvy, *The Positive Parent: Raising Healthy, Happy and Successful Children, Birth-Adolescence*, Teachers College Press and the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring.

**“To keep the body in good health is a duty ... otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind strong and clear.”**

—Buddha

# Talk to your teen about ways to combat online bullying



Teens spend much of their time texting friends and sharing posts on social media sites.

Not surprisingly, these are the channels that many bullies use to harass other students. Studies show that 60 percent of students see frequent bullying online—and only one in 10 teen victims will inform a trusted adult.

Whether it's a disrespectful comment posted on a photo or a rumor that's been reposted several times, cyberbullying can have a devastating effect on students' self-confidence and academic performance.

Teens play an important role in defeating cyberbullying. Teach your teen to:

- **Delete content** and comments on social media that are mean-spirited or make fun of others. Your teen should not share negative comments with friends. Bullying escalates when others help spread the message.
- **Unfollow or block users** who repeatedly post harmful or negative things about others.
- **Report bullying** to a trusted adult. Teens often operate under a code of silence. But reporting can help prevent harm and end the situation.
- **Stop and think** before posting something that could hurt someone.
- **Talk with other students.** Your teen should let friends know that cyberbullying is uncool.

Source: “11 Facts About Cyber Bullying,” DoSomething.org.

# Do you know how to talk about the tough issues?



Teens often face some pretty tough situations—from encouragement to take risks at a party to feeling pressured by a

friend to skip a class. Are you helping your teen face difficult issues head on? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- 1. Do you talk** about difficult situations your teen may face *before* they occur?
- 2. Do you role-play** different ways to say *no*? “My mom would ground me for life!” is a favorite standby.
- 3. Have you told** your teen you expect honesty—especially about serious issues?
- 4. Do you talk** to your teen about the values that are important in your family?
- 5. Do you create** everyday opportunities to talk with your teen? Casual conversations often pave the way for more serious talks.

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are having positive talks with your teen about tough issues. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Four ways to help your new student adjust to high school



The transition to high school is a pretty big deal. In high school, classes are harder, and teachers have higher expectations.

Some of your teen's friends may be in other classes and some may be at other schools.

To support your high schooler through this transition:

## 1. Help your teen create a schedule.

Your teen will need to spend more time on schoolwork. Extracurricular activities may require more time, too. Work together to create a realistic schedule that includes all of your teen's responsibilities. Expect your teen to keep track of everything on a calendar.

## 2. Promote effective study habits.

The first marking period is critical. Help your teen set a regular daily study time. Recommend regularly checking grades on quizzes and assignments. Is your teen falling behind in a class? Suggest your student talk to the teacher about getting help right away.

## 3. Establish tech downtime.

Expect your teen to charge digital devices outside of the bedroom overnight so they don't interfere with sleep. Devices should be banned from mealtime, too.

## 4. Talk about school every day.

Ask about the social aspects of high school and let your teen know you are available to talk.

**Q:** Many of my eleventh grader's friends have ideas about careers they'd like to prepare for.

However, my teen has absolutely no idea. How can I help my high schooler begin to think more about the future?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** There are lots of high school students who don't know what they want to do for a career—and that's OK. But you are wise to want your teen to start thinking about the future.

To get your student thinking, ask a few questions:

- **What subjects do you enjoy in school?** Thinking about this may guide your teen toward types of jobs to explore.
- **What do you like to do in your spare time?** Does your teen like to read? Create or build things? Spend time outdoors?
- **Do you enjoy being in large groups of people or in smaller groups?** If your teen prefers small groups, a career in web design or research may be a good fit. Teens who thrive in larger groups may be interested in pursuing careers in health-care or teaching, for example.
- **How can you get experience?** Could your teen spend a few days shadowing someone in a career of interest? If healthcare sounds interesting, for example, could your teen volunteer at a hospital?

Be sure to ask the school about resources, too. The school counselor may have assessments and information that can help your teen narrow down choices. A counselor should also be able to help your teen determine what type of degree or training will be needed to achieve career goals.

# Taking notes while reading boosts your teen's retention



It can be challenging for some teens to remember what they have studied. One effective way for them to meet that challenge is

to take notes while reading.

This six-question note-taking method helps students identify and remember the most important people, events and dates when studying history or reading literature.

Have your teen create six headings on a piece of paper: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* While reading an assignment, have your teen look for the answers to each of these questions and jot down relevant facts and information:

1. **Who?** Who was there? Who were the most important characters?
2. **What?** What were the most important things that happened?

3. **Where?** Where did this event take place? Why is that place significant? Would the event have been different if it had occurred elsewhere?

4. **When?** When did it happen? Were there any important reasons the event happened when it did (and not earlier or later)?

5. **Why?** What did this event happen? What were the causes? Why is it important to learn about this event?

6. **How?** How did it happen? How did it turn out?

If your high schooler has trouble finding answers to these questions while reading a school assignment, suggest practicing with a news article. News stories aim to answer these six questions in the first few paragraphs.

# It Matters: The Family-School Team

## Expect your teen to know & follow all school rules



If your teen is caught driving faster than the speed limit, saying, “I didn’t know” won’t keep the police officer from issuing a ticket. The same is true for school rules. As the new year begins, your teen needs to become aware of the “rules of the road” during the school day.

Make sure you and your teen understand rules about:

- **Attendance.** What are the consequences for skipping a class? For being late? If your teen is sick, how should you let the school know? Also, find out what types of absences are considered excused and what types are considered unexcused—along with their consequences.
- **Clothing.** Does your teen know what clothing is and is not allowed at school? You don’t want to spend money on clothes that your teen can never wear to school, so make sure to find out!
- **Schoolwork.** At the beginning of the school year, teachers explain their policies about assignments and late work. And since rules may vary from class to class, it’s especially important for your teen to pay attention.
- **Technology.** Make sure your teen is aware of the consequences for device misuse. Are students allowed to bring mobile devices into the classroom? Emphasize to your teen that phones or tablets should never be used to cheat. Also discuss appropriate and inappropriate use of artificial intelligence for schoolwork.

## Help your high schooler build positive teacher relationships

Your teen may not excel in every class, but by treating teachers with respect, your student will be a faculty favorite.

Teachers appreciate students who:

1. **Are polite.** They make requests, not demands.
2. **Listen** when others are speaking.
3. **Say they’re sorry** (and mean it) when they’ve made a mistake.
4. **Express their ideas** without putting other classmates down.

To encourage respectful behavior:

- **Be a role model.** When talking with your teen, call teachers by their names—not “that math teacher.”
- **Help your teen** put minor complaints into perspective. Your student may be upset with something a teacher said in class.



Remind your teen, “Teaching is hard work. Mr. Smith was probably just tired.”

- **Meet your teen’s teachers.** It’s always easier to work together once you have spoken one-on-one.

## Planning ahead helps students stay on top of schoolwork



In the busy life of a high school student, it’s easy for assignments and responsibilities to slip through the cracks.

To help your teen stay organized, have your student:

- **Use a planner.** Teens have a lot on their minds. And when something gets forgotten, it’s more likely to be an English reading assignment than the lyrics to a favorite song. So make sure your teen has—and uses—a planner. Recommend writing down every assignment.
- **Put after-school activities** in the planner. That way, your teen can

see which nights are the busiest. If a project is due on Friday and your teen has a game Thursday night, it will be easy to see that the project must be finished by Wednesday night.

- **Expect the unexpected** when working on long-term projects and start early. If your teen waits until the night before the paper is due to look for source material, it may not be easily available. Planning ahead is a valuable habit to help your teen develop.

Source: D. Goldberg, *The Organized Student: Teaching Children the Skills for Success in School and Beyond*, Simon & Schuster.