



Five strategies boost your teen's analytical thinking skills

When students develop their analytical thinking skills, they are better prepared to face academic and personal challenges. To provide practice using these essential thinking skills, encourage your teen to:

1. **Explain situations**, examples and problems in detail. To describe an issue effectively, your teen will need to learn vocabulary and practice expressing thoughts clearly.
2. **Analyze information**. When reading something online or in print, your teen shouldn't just take it at face value. Suggest finding credible sources to determine the actual facts.
3. **See all sides of an issue**. Is your teen passionate about a particular issue? Ask your student to develop arguments defending opposing viewpoints with equal dedication. This will help your teen look deeply at an issue and understand different perspectives.
4. **Participate in "thinking"** extracurricular activities. Working on a school newspaper will teach your teen to conduct interviews and write articles based on information. A drama club will expose your teen to great works of literature. A chess club will teach strategic decision-making. All of these skills enhance analytical thinking abilities.
5. **Embrace people's differences**. Throughout life, your teen will interact with people from all kinds of backgrounds. Trying to understand differences will help your teen gain insights about others and the world.

Family meals foster strong relationships



Where's the best place to connect with your high schooler? It may be over a meal.

To make the most of family mealtimes:

- **Schedule them**. If you can't eat together every day, try to sit down together a few times each week.
- **Be flexible**. If evening meals are often difficult to schedule, share breakfast with your teen instead. You'll have the same opportunity to connect.
- **Include your teen** in mealtime conversations. Ask your high schooler specific questions to get more than a *yes* or *no* answer. "What's one interesting thing you learned in science class today?"
- **Keep it pleasant**. Don't use mealtimes as opportunities to criticize your teen or start arguments.
- **Laugh**. Humor can make mealtime fun for everyone.
- **Go low-tech**. Turn off digital devices and enjoy family meals free from distractions.

Source: S.G. Wallace, "The Art and Science of Family Dinner," *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers, LLC.

Have a discussion with your teen about academic integrity



Studies show that the majority of high school students have cheated at one time or another—and technology has made academic dishonesty easier than ever.

Teens are under a lot of pressure to do well, and many see cheating as a way to lessen some of that pressure. As a result, anything from copying someone's assignment to plagiarizing a paper has become commonplace behavior.

To discourage cheating, remind your teen that:

- **Cheating is wrong**—even if it seems like everybody does it.
- **Cheating hurts the cheater.** Not having to do the work may seem like a plus, but your teen

probably won't learn the information needed later for a test.

- **You'd rather your teen** put forth honest effort and earn a low grade than score higher by cheating. If you find out your teen has been cheating, offer support. Your teen may not understand the concepts being taught in class. Work together to get the extra help your teen needs.

Source: E.M. Anderman, "Why students at prestigious high schools still cheat on exams," *The Conversation*.

"No matter how small the dishonest deed is, at the end of the day, cheating is cheating.

—Mohammad Amir

This research-based process can bolster your teen's writing



Writing is a key skill for success in nearly every subject, and is also an essential part of many college applications. Research shows that five steps help teens improve their writing.

When your teen has a writing assignment, review this process together:

1. **Prepare.** Your teen should spend time brainstorming and listing important points to include. Another strategy is to spend 10 minutes writing down everything your teen knows about the topic.
2. **Research.** Your teen can search online, read news articles, or get help finding sources at the library. Having a deep understanding of the topic will make your teen's writing more interesting.

3. **Make an outline.** Teens hate this step—but it works. Have your teen try different kinds of outlines. The traditional numbers-and-letters outline works well for some teens. Others prefer a tree or a series of connected circles.

4. **Write more than one draft.** The first draft is the "down draft"—it's the time for your teen to get ideas down on paper. Once it's finished, your teen should set it aside for a while. After taking a break from it, your teen may have ideas for how to improve the next draft.

5. **Proofread.** Your teen should read over the final draft and check for spelling or grammatical errors.

Source: J. Unger and S. Fleischman, "Research Matters: Is Process Writing the 'Write Stuff'?" *Educational Leadership*, ASCD.

Are you helping your teen learn from mistakes?



All teens make mistakes—like everyone else. What's important is what they do *after* they discover they've made a mistake.

Are you helping your student learn and grow from mistakes? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ 1. **Do you react calmly** when your teen makes a mistake? Your teen should be able to talk with you about mistakes without fear of judgment or punishment.
- ___ 2. **Do you ask** what lessons your teen can learn from the mistake?
- ___ 3. **Do you admit** when you make a mistake and talk about what you're going to do to fix it?
- ___ 4. **Do you talk** to your teen about some of the important lessons you've learned from the mistakes you've made?
- ___ 5. **Do you tell** your teen that it's OK not to be perfect? Perfectionists have a tendency to overreact to mistakes.

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're helping your teen turn mistakes into learning opportunities. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

High School Parents
still make the difference!

Practical Ideas for Parents
to Help Their Children.

For subscription information call or write:
The Parent Institute, 1-800-756-5525,
P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: www.parent-institute.com.

Published monthly September through May.
Copyright © 2024, The Parent Institute,
a division of PaperClip Media, Inc., an
independent, private agency. Equal
opportunity employer.

Publisher: Doris McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.

A serious study group can help your student prepare for tests



You may not think it's wise for your teen to study with friends. However, studying with others can actually benefit students.

A study group can allow your teen to share strengths and bolster weaknesses. It is also great practice for adulthood, when your teen may have to collaborate with others on projects.

The key is for your teen to form a study group in which the members *really* study. Share these tips:

- **Select members carefully.** This is a crucial part of forming an effective study group. Members should be serious about studying and want to do well in school. Teens with strong personal relationships may not work

well together in the same study group unless they are skilled at separating working from socializing.

- **Keep the group small.** Between four and six people works well.
- **Consider how to divide the work.** In a study group, each person usually handles one part of the material. It is helpful if members get assignments that play to their strengths. Then, they can share more easily and explain their sections to the rest of the group.
- **Keep it professional.** Have a set day and time for meetings and stick to the schedule. Members may also want to pick a leader (rotate this position) for each meeting. Part of the leader's job is to keep the studying on track.

Teach healthy relationship skills so your teen can focus on school



Many students begin to date or “hang out” once they are in high school. Unfortunately, some teens don't know what healthy relationships look like.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner in a single year. And only 33% of those teens tell anyone about the abuse. That's why it's vital for families to know the signs.

When teens are in unhealthy relationships, they often:

- **Do poorly in school** or miss school because they don't feel safe.
- **Doubt their self-worth**, feelings and decision-making ability.
- **Engage in unhealthy behaviors**, such as drug and alcohol use.

- **Become depressed** and anxious.
- **Are at a higher risk** of self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

Talk with your teen about mutual respect. Explain that people who genuinely care about one another and are in healthy relationships:

- **Can talk openly.** Communication is the key to a strong relationship.
- **Work together** to make decisions. They also support and balance each other.
- **Divide their time** between their relationship and their friends and family. A relationship where two people never see anyone but each other isn't healthy.
- **Feel free to be themselves.** People in a healthy relationship accept each other's differences.

Source: “Teen Dating Violence,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Q: My high schooler has a bad habit of putting things off. If there is a big paper due, my teen waits until the night before to get started—sometimes until very late on the night before. How can I help my teen break this habit?

Questions & Answers

A: We all put some things off from time to time. But when it gets to be a habit for students, procrastination can have serious consequences.

Begin by asking why your teen puts things off so you can address the specific issue. Some students are afraid of failing. Others simply like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute. Some just don't feel like starting things until they have no choice.

Whatever the cause, your teen needs to work on changing this habit before entering college or the workplace. To help, encourage your teen to:

- **Break up** large, challenging projects into smaller more manageable steps.
- **Set deadlines** for each step. Yes, your teen may still wait until close to the deadline to finish each part, but bit by bit the project will be completed. And once students get started on a project, they often find that it's easier to keep working.
- **Take a short break** and do something fun after completing each step. Perhaps your teen can spend a few minutes reading about a favorite topic or listening to music.
- **Focus on long-term goals.** Learning how to study and manage time wisely strengthens academic performance and will help your teen prepare for future success.

It Matters: Positive Discipline

Brain changes affect teenagers' behavior & needs



Teenagers are often moody and unable to explain why—but science can. Teens' brains are going

through significant development and fine-tuning, which continues into their mid-to-late 20s. That partially explains why your teen may be laughing one minute and angry the next.

Experts agree that students need their families' support in the teen years more than ever. To help your teen navigate changes and be successful in school, offer your:

- **Time.** Family time shows teens that you care about them. They may claim they'll "die of embarrassment" if they're seen getting ice cream with you, but deep down, they are thankful to be with you.
- **Encouragement.** Teens want—and need—adults' approval. Say that you believe in your teen's ability to learn and do well.
- **Patience.** Teens are exploring a variety of things—new looks, new interests and new ideas. They're attempting to expand their horizons and navigate changes in the world. Be patient with your teen, discuss new interests and choose battles carefully.
- **Guidance.** Support your teen by asking thought-provoking questions and discussing potential consequences.
- **Nurturing.** Demonstrate how to make healthy food and exercise choices. Be available to talk and always tell your teen, "I love you."

Source: M. Barone, M.A., M.F.T., "Living and Learning with Teens," Homefires.

A written discipline plan curbs arguments & misunderstandings

Teens who follow rules at home are more likely to follow rules at school, too. While some teens are cooperative and respectful, others resist rules and enjoy arguing over every point.

A written discipline plan (created before any misbehavior) outlines what your teen should do, and the consequence for not doing it. It also eliminates the need to argue. You can point to the plan to remind your teen of exactly what you both agreed to.

To create an effective plan:

- **Keep it simple.** Too many rules will overwhelm both of you. Think of the top five issues that are most important to you. Post those rules and the consequences for not following them.
- **Involve your teen.** A teen who needs a written discipline plan is also a teen who does not like to give up control. Ask for input



about rules and consequences—but remind your teen that you have the final say.

- **Monitor progress.** When you notice that your teen is able to stay consistently within boundaries, it's time to review and possibly revise the plan.

Don't fall into the trap of being your high schooler's friend



Many high school students look more like young adults than children. But remember: Your teen is still a child and not your peer. Teens need adults to be in charge—and adults need teens to respect them and their rules.

To avoid falling into the friend trap:

- **Require your teen** to be respectful to you and other adults. Don't continue a conversation if your teen is being rude. Walk away and

agree to talk when your teen is ready to speak respectfully.

- **Don't try to be the "cool parent"** in the neighborhood. You should be kind and caring to your teen and friends, but you are not "one of the kids."
- **Do not make decisions** based on what would please your teen and friends. They might like it if you paid for them all to see a horror movie, but is it a wise parenting choice? Trust yourself as the adult and make decisions accordingly.