

Help Your Child Balance School & Extracurricular Activities



It's Tuesday—so that means your child will go from school to soccer practice. Then you'll take her to her music lesson. Tomorrow night, it's scouts and choir practice. Meanwhile, your teenager wants to get a part-time job—but he's already on the football team *and* in the band.

How much is too much? Beyond the regular school day, how can kids balance their desire to take part in activities with their need to study and still enjoy themselves?

Here are tips on helping your children benefit from participation in activities—but still have time for studying and just growing up.

QuickTips

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MAINTAINING THE BALANCE



How can you tell if your child is involved with too many activities? Here are some signs:

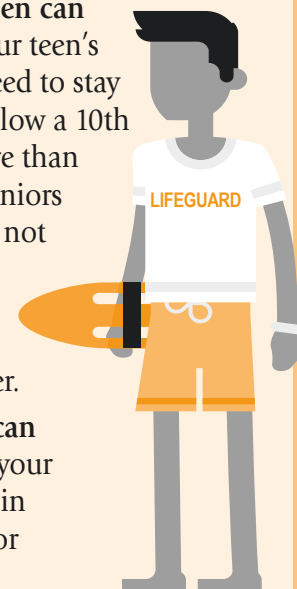
- **Her grades drop.**
- **She is tired all the time.** She can't seem to catch up on her sleep.
- **She complains** that she never has time to see her friends.
- **She is involved** in two or more after-school activities on a given day of the week. On days loaded with activities, your child may run out of time or energy for schoolwork. That's when the balance between school and activities is upset.
- **She cannot meet the basic obligations** of the activity. For example, if your child is taking music lessons and does not have time to practice every day.

If your child is showing any of these signs, talk about what activities are most important. Prioritizing will make it easier to decide which activities to cut out.

Tips on After-School Jobs

Around 18 percent of students aged 16-19 work after school at paying jobs. If your student is working and going to school, it's important to set some limits on:

- **How your teen uses earnings.** In too many cases, experts say, teens use the money they earn to finance binge buying. Expect a regular accounting of where your teen's money is going. Help him create a budget that includes a savings plan.
- **How much your teen can work.** It may be your teen's job, but you still need to stay in control. Don't allow a 10th grader to work more than 10 hours a week. Juniors and seniors should not work more than 20 hours. Otherwise, schoolwork and family life can suffer.
- **Where your child can work.** Don't allow your teen to work alone in a store after dark, for example.



What Are the Benefits of After-School Activities?

After-school activities:

- Give students a chance to have fun, earn recognition and build self-esteem.
- Round out a student's education.
- Develop physical, social and intellectual abilities.
- Help students on college applications. Many colleges look at activities, as well as grades, when making admittance decisions.
- Reinforce a student's feeling of belonging at school, and reduce risk of dropping out.



Schoolwork Comes First

School is your child's job. Even if you believe she's talented enough to be a world-class skater, school must come first. When your child no longer has time for schoolwork or is so tired she can't finish her assignments, she's under too much stress. It's time to cut back on activities so she can meet her primary responsibility—going to school.

Make Sure Your Child Gets Enough Sleep

A growing number of students—especially teens—suffer from sleep deprivation. That leads to poor concentration in school and an increase in many illnesses.

What can you do to help your teen avoid sleep deprivation?

- **Develop a regular schedule.** A child who goes to bed at 1:30 a.m. one night and 9:00 p.m. the next is likely to have more sleep problems than a child who has a more consistent bedtime. If possible, keep his weekend schedule similar to his schedule during the week.
- **Set a screen time curfew,** and charge devices outside of your child's room.
- **Discourage exercise late at night** because exercise stimulates the body rather than relaxing it.



Your Child Needs Your Guidance

With all the activities available to students today, it's easy for them to get so involved that they lose sight of their most important priority—getting an education. You have the experience and the maturity to understand that. Your child may not. Children need parents' help in balancing their activities and schoolwork.

Students can learn some of their most important lessons from outside activities. That's why schools sponsor so many events for students. But your child needs you to set reasonable limits. Watch for the signals of over-involvement. Limit after-school jobs if earning spending money interferes with academic achievement.

Learning to cope with competing activities and responsibilities is part of a student's education. Your child can learn these lessons best with your help.

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