

# Ways Busy Parents Can Help Teens Succeed In High School



**R**esearchers were surprised to learn that when asked if they wanted more time or more money, most people answered, “More time.” With parents already feeling so harried that they hardly have time sit down for a meal, how can they find the time to help their children succeed in high school?

Many busy parents have figured out ways to find the time for the important job of helping their teens learn more. Here are some parent-proven tips you can use, too.

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## TIPS ON FINDING MORE TIME

**S**ome parents seem to fit more things into a day than others do. No, they haven't found a way to stop the clock—they've just learned to use their time more efficiently. Here are some ways you can manage your time, and help your teenager:

### 1. Set priorities

Sit down and list what's truly important to you. (Odds are your kids are at the top of your list.) Then decide how to spend your time. Make sure your decisions reflect what is important to you. Have a choice between cooking a fancy dinner or talking with your teen about school? Order a pizza and talk.



### 2. Spend one-on-one time

“Quality time” is a deceptive myth. What your teen really needs is “quantity time” with you. He needs time to talk with you. Time to see and hear how you would apply your experience and your values to the problems he is facing. There's nothing like spending time alone with a parent to make a child of any age feel special. Try making an appointment to spend some time alone with your teen each week. Write it on your calendar. Then treat that appointment as seriously as you would an important business meeting.

### 3. Use the 'off' button

You probably have more time than you think, but it's being stolen from you and your teen by electronics! So what can you do?

- **Turn off the television.** Record any programs you and your teen just can't miss.
- **Turn off the phones.** Let voice mail catch the calls for several hours each evening.
- **Turn off the computer.** Or set a timer. It's amazing how much time can be lost searching the Internet, emailing and instant messaging.

Use your media-free time to help your teen with homework problems, to read together or just to talk.



## Use Car Time

**Y**ou spend a lot of time in the car alone with your child. It's a wonderful opportunity to have meaningful conversations and a real influence on your child. Think about it. There are sensitive issues you (and your child) want to discuss—from the changes puberty brings to concerns about what your child wants to make of her life. In the car you don't have to make eye contact. Your child can't "leave the room." No one can overhear you. You can "go around the block" again if you need more time. It's perfect.

Make the most of car time to:

- **Squeeze in a little more learning.** Your teen can't write an essay in the car—but you can ask about what she's going to write for an assignment that's due soon. Ask what questions she would ask if she were making up the next test in history or another subject.
- **Talk and listen**—really listen—to your teen. Turn off the radio and have your teen turn off her MP3 player. Ask, "What would you like to talk about?" And then force yourself to be quiet and listen. Repeat the question with a silent glance if necessary, but be quiet. Listen ... wait ... and don't be surprised if you end up having the best conversation you've had in years. Listening is the secret.

## Volunteer After Hours

**Y**ou don't always have to go to school during the day to be involved in your teen's education. Here are some things you can do at home or after the school day:

- **Collect and send in materials** a teacher needs for a class project.
- **Create a list of community resources** that support what a class is studying.
- **Recruit other parents** to volunteer.
- **Enlist businesses** to donate to a school fund-raiser.
- **Attend school events** held in the evening such as band concerts, athletic events, plays or art fairs.
- **Put together "Welcome Kits"** for families new to your school.
- **Tutor students** needing extra help.
- **Make props or costumes** for the school play.
- **Help supervise** school dances.
- **Join, or help lead,** the parent-teacher-student organization.
- **Attend parent-teacher conferences** and other school meetings.
- **Help organize** a career education day or a college fair.



## Exchange Notes With Your Teen

**H**ere's a great way for you to keep the lines of communication open with your teen, while building self-esteem and encouraging writing at the same time.

When you have a few free moments during the day, write a note to your teen. You can compliment her for a job well done, write about the things you are doing at work or just let her know you are thinking about her. And don't be surprised if your teen writes you back.

## Stay Out of My Life! *(but I still need you)*

Teenagers want to be independent. It's common for them to discourage your school involvement. But despite what they do or say, they still need and want your attention and your interest in their schoolwork. They count on you to be there for them, to attend school events and to show that you care.

The time you spend with your teen now will help him do better in school today—and help build a solid relationship for the future.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474  
(800) 756-5525 • [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com)  
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