

High School Parents[®]

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Education Service Center Region 15

still make the difference!



Help your teen get off to a great start this school year!

Whether it's your teen's first year in high school or his last, here are a few simple things you can do now to help him have a successful school year:

- **Meet with your teen's teachers.** Do this at back-to-school night or schedule an appointment. Opening lines of communication early will make it easier for you to work together if a problem arises.
- **Write down the names and email addresses of your teen's teachers.** Also write down contact information for the principal, the attendance office and your teen's guidance counselor. Keep the information handy for easy access throughout the year. Follow the school on social media, too.

- **Plan to attend the school events** that involve your teen. You'll have fun, you'll show that you care about your teen and his school, and you'll get to meet other parents. These contacts will be useful when your teen tells you he's the only student who has a curfew.
- **Make it clear** that there will be homework time at your house every day. Homework is essential in high school. Your teen can make decisions about *when* to do homework, but not *whether* to do it.
- **Check with the guidance counselor** to make sure your teen is on track to attend college. Even if he isn't sure he wants to go to college, he should take courses that leave that option open.

Challenge your teen to set a reading goal



The older students get, the less they tend to read for pleasure. A recent study found that a whopping 27 percent of high school seniors never read on their own for fun!

Reading is a skill that, like all skills, improves with practice. Students who read for pleasure show stronger reading comprehension skills and are able to read more quickly. They also do better in school.

If your teen is one of the many who have stopped reading for enjoyment, challenge her to set a reading goal for this school year. The goal can be measured in minutes spent reading, pages read or number of books read. Work with your teen to come up with a suitable reward for reaching her goal.

If she's not sure what books to choose, she can visit the American Library Association at www.ala.org/yalsa for recent "Teens' Top Ten" lists of books voted on by other teens.

Source: *Children, Teens, and Reading: A Common Sense Media Research Brief*, Common Sense Media, nismc.com/high_reading.

Set high but fair expectations to help your student succeed



All parents want their teens to succeed. And teens usually want to be successful. But sometimes parents and teens don't have the same goals. Then parents' attempts to inspire can backfire.

Keep these points in mind as you try to motivate your teen:

- **Your teen's goals and dreams** for her future may be different from the ones you have for her. Support her interests as much as you can. But also encourage her to keep her options open.
- **No one is an expert at everything.** Applaud what your teen does well. In areas where she doesn't excel, let her know that you expect her to try her best. Focus more on her efforts than on the result.

- **Once you know your teen's strengths,** don't accept carelessness. It's fine to say, "I think you rushed through that essay. I know you can do better."
- **Don't compare your teen** with others. Questions like, "Why can't you make A's in science like your sister did?" will only cause friction and make your teen feel inferior.

"Education is a shared commitment between dedicated teachers, motivated students and enthusiastic parents with high expectations."

—Bob Beauprez

Give your teen strategies for taking effective notes in class



Why do some teens do better in school than others? One reason may be that they take notes. When teens take notes, they're also paying closer attention to what they hear in class. That makes it easier for them to learn the material and remember it at test time.

Here are some tips to help your teen become a better note taker:

- **Listen for the main ideas.** Anything the teacher repeats more than once or writes on the board should go in your teen's notes. He should also write down any words that the teacher defines.
- **Keep it brief.** Your teen should use a system of abbreviations and symbols. However, he needs to make sure he remembers what they mean. If he is skilled at texting, he may want to use those abbreviations when taking notes in class.
- **Review the notes** as soon as possible. Your teen will be better able to fill in something he missed and more likely to remember the information come test time.
- **Use colors and shapes.** Your teen can draw a circle or box around the most important idea. He can also use colored markers to show how ideas relate.

Are you teaching your teen how to get organized?



Most teens are not naturally organized. They need to be taught strategies that will help them get to school on time, with the books and homework they need.

Are you helping your teen learn organization skills? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

1. **Does your teen** use a planner to record homework assignments? Does she review it after school?
2. **Does your teen** have a set place by the door for things that are going to school the next day?
3. **Does your teen** break large projects into smaller parts and create deadlines for each section?
4. **Does your teen** schedule time for homework, work and sports—and write it on a calendar?
5. **Does your teen** keep supplies and reference books on hand for doing homework and other projects?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you're helping your teen develop organization skills. Mostly *no* answers? Try those ideas in the quiz.

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Ask your teen to be responsible for limiting mobile device use



According to a recent poll conducted by Common Sense Media, 50% of teens “feel addicted” to their phones and other mobile devices. They feel pressured to respond immediately to social media posts, text messages and other notifications.

Experts agree that this technology addiction can have a negative effect on teens’ learning and academic performance. While it’s unrealistic to think your teen will give up her phone for good, she can learn to monitor and limit her usage responsibly. Here’s how:

- **Encourage her to spend** one day tracking the number of times she picks up her phone or other

mobile device and the amount of time she spends on it.

- **Challenge her to reduce** that time the next day. Help her brainstorm ways to accomplish this. Perhaps she could turn off notifications and only check her phone during specific times.
- **Help her establish** technology-free times. These are times when mobile devices should be turned off or out of reach, such as when she does homework, eats family meals, drives and goes to bed.

As your teen learns to take more responsibility for her time, she may be surprised at how much more she can accomplish in a day!

Source: Technology Addiction: Concern, Controversy, and Finding Balance, Common Sense Media Inc.

Find ways to spend quality time with your teen this school year



Before kids can drive, they have to spend time with their parents. Otherwise, they won’t get to friends’ houses, sports practices and other activities.

But by high school, either they can drive—or they can find a friend who can get them places. And time spent with parents decreases.

But it’s a mistake to think that teens don’t want to spend time with parents. They need their parents’ approval, attention and time more than ever.

How can you spend quality time with your teen? Here are just a few ideas to get you started:

- **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.

- **Ask your teen** to help you plan a family outing. Teens like to give their input and are more invested in activities they help to plan.
- **Schedule a family game night.** Let your teen invite a friend over to participate. As a bonus, you’ll get to know his friend a bit better!
- **Read together.** Choose a book that you’ll both enjoy reading and make time to discuss it.
- **Work on a project.** Does a room or closet need organizing? With your teen, brainstorm a plan of attack.
- **Talk to your teen about school.** Show interest in the things he is learning and ask questions. You could even ask him to teach you something he is learning.

Q: My son is starting his senior year of high school. I know this can be a stressful year for kids and parents alike. What can I do to make this school year a pleasant one?

Questions & Answers

A: Senior year is a time of letting go. It’s the time when teens prepare to leave home and live on their own. And while parents understand that needs to happen, the process of separation isn’t always easy.

One of the biggest causes of stress—for parents and teens—is the feeling of uncertainty when teens don’t know what they’re going to be doing next year. Help your son make these plans—and then help him take action to achieve his plans:

- **If your teen plans** to go to college, he should be finalizing his list of prospective schools. Filling out college applications often takes more time than most teens expect, so make sure he allows himself plenty of time.
- **If your teen is** not going on to college, help him plan what he will do next year. Many community colleges and vocational schools offer one- and two-year programs that will help him qualify for a good job.

Whatever your teen’s plans for next year, spend as much time with him as you can this year. Take time to do some special things together. Next spring, when your son is marching to “Pomp and Circumstance,” you’ll be glad you took the time to savor every moment of this school year.

It Matters: The Home-School Team

Attendance plays a big role in your teen's future



One of the best ways to support your teen's education is to make sure he attends school regularly. Attendance is

important. Your teen can't learn if he isn't in school.

Teens who miss too much school are more likely to:

- **Drop out.** Missing too many classes is the first sign that a teen may give up on school.
- **Get into trouble.** One study found that 78 percent of those who ended up in prison had a first arrest for school truancy.

The beginning of the school year is a good time to develop positive habits. To make school attendance a priority:

- **Discuss the importance of attendance and punctuality.** If your teen didn't show up at his job, he'd get fired. Let him know that attending school is no less important.
- **Avoid scheduling medical and other appointments for your teen during school hours.**
- **Communicate with teachers.** If your teen must miss class, talk to the teacher to see how you can work together to make sure your teen stays on track.
- **Set a good example.** Make sure you attend school events when possible. Ask your teen about school every day and encourage him to get involved in school activities.

Source: "What's the Link Between Truancy and Delinquency?" San Bernardino County District Attorney, niswc.com/high_truancy.

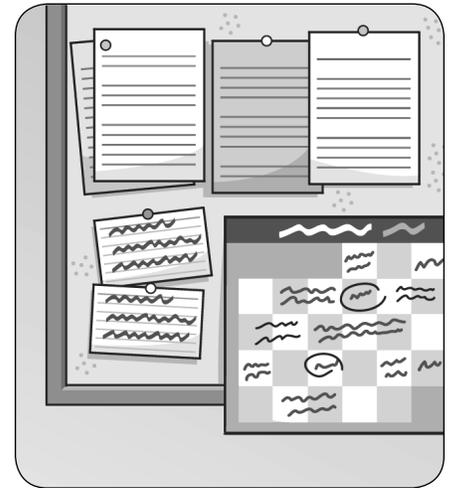
Support your teen's learning with a solid homework routine

Do you sometimes feel like there's nothing you can do when it comes to helping your teen with her homework? One way you can help is to encourage her to create a homework routine.

A homework routine can help your teen learn to manage her time and take responsibility for her own learning.

To establish an effective homework routine, your teen should:

- **Choose a time** for homework. Doing homework at the same time every day helps your teen's brain get used to focusing at that time. Let your teen find the time that works best for her.
- **Find a place** for homework. It should be well-lit and free from distractions. Your teen should also make sure she has all of her supplies nearby so she



isn't constantly getting up to go find a calculator or an eraser.

- **Get organized.** She should have a system for keeping track of her assignments. She should also have a calendar where she can track her progress on long-term assignments and projects.

Discipline at home and school is vital to academic success



No athlete would take the field without knowing the rules. And no student should start the school year without knowing the rules either.

As your high schooler begins a new academic year, reinforce the school's efforts to create a positive learning environment. Talk to your teen about:

- **Obeying school rules.** Read them together and let your teen know you support the school's discipline policies.
- **Treating teachers with respect.** Your teen can show respect by coming to class prepared and on time, completing assignments and participating in class discussions.
- **Following family rules.** Teens who are expected to cooperate at home are more likely to do the same in school. The start of a new school year is a good time to review rules at home, too. Work with your teen to set the consequences for breaking the rules.