

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



This five-step process can bolster your teen's writing

Writing is a key skill for success in nearly every subject, and is also a critical part of many college applications. So how can you help your teen strengthen her writing skills?

Research shows that five steps help teens improve their writing:

1. **Prepare.** Your teen should spend time brainstorming and listing key points to include. Or, she can try writing for 10 minutes. This will help her figure out what she already knows about the topic.
2. **Research.** Your teen can search online, read newspaper articles, or get help at the library. The extra research will deepen her understanding and make her 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 even 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 her ideas down on paper. Once it’s finished, she should set it aside for a while. When your teen comes back to it, she may have ideas for how to rephrase or reorganize.
5. **Proofread.** Your teen should read over her final draft and check for any spelling or grammatical errors.

Source: J. Unger and S. Fleischman, “Research Matters: Is Process Writing the ‘Write Stuff?’” *Educational Leadership*, ASCD.

Help your teen build a strong vocabulary



In order for your teen to be successful on college entrance exams, like the SAT and ACT, he needs

to have a strong vocabulary.

Your teen may already be learning a list of specific vocabulary words in school. Here’s how to support that learning at home:

- **Use flash cards.** Being quizzed on words and their definitions might not be your teen’s favorite activity, but it is effective—and a simple way for you to get involved. Just read the definition and have your teen provide the word. Or, read the word and ask your teen to name two synonyms.
- **Declare a Word of the Day.** Look at your teen’s vocabulary list and choose a new word each day. Challenge family members to use this word in regular conversation.
- **Text your teen** a vocabulary word and its definition. Or just text him a word and ask him to text you the definition. Teens just can’t seem to stay away from their phones, so texting is a great way to sneak in some learning.

These surprising statistics may motivate teens to stay in school



High school graduates make more money than high school dropouts—on average, about \$8,000 more each year. But if money alone isn't enough to motivate your teen to stay in school, share these other facts.

High school graduates:

- **Live longer** than high school dropouts.
- **Are more likely to be employed.**
- **Are less likely to commit crimes** or require social services.
- **Are more likely to contribute** to their communities by voting and volunteering.

Getting your teen to stay in school can be as simple as helping him understand how important his

education is. Teens don't always see the big picture—the effect that finishing high school has on the rest of their lives. So talk about what he can achieve with education, and how much you appreciate your own education—or why you wish you had learned more.

Source: "High School Graduation Facts: Ending the Dropout Crisis," America's Promise Alliance, nswc.com/high_dropoutfacts.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

—Nelson Mandela

Simple strategies can help you reinforce your teen's learning



The concept of reinforcing learning can be tricky when you are the parent of a high school student.

Your teen may be learning a high-level math. She may be up to her ears in chemistry or a foreign language. Or, she may be in a specialized vocational program. And you may not feel that you know enough about the subject to reinforce it.

However, all that is really necessary is to create a family life that values learning and makes it possible. Here's how:

- **Talk about the jobs** people hold whenever you visit a place with your teen. Discuss the education needed for such a job, but keep the conversation casual.
- **Encourage your teen** to research and explore. For example, ask her

to help you find out where to get a service you need or to find a new place for your family to visit.

- **Let your teen know** that you are interested in anything new she learns at school. Tell her you would love to have her explain some concepts to you.
- **Plan family projects** that involve learning skills, such as painting a wall or cooking a special meal, that you and your teen can do together.
- **Encourage your teen's talents**, even if they are not what you would have picked. Let her know that you respect what she can do. Remember, these talents may become the foundation for her future career.
- **Ask for your teen's opinions** on everything. Make sure she knows that you value her opinion—whether you agree with it or not.

Are you helping your teen handle academic issues?



For many teens, there is one class that is a real challenge. Perhaps the teacher isn't their favorite. Perhaps the subject is more complex. Whatever the issue, their grades begin to suffer.

If your teen is struggling in a class, do you know how to handle the problem? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about the class and asked her why she thinks she is struggling?
- ___ **2. Have you encouraged** your teen to spend time studying for this class every day? Minds are like muscles that get stronger with practice.
- ___ **3. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk with the teacher to develop a plan for improvement?
- ___ **4. Have you helped** your teen explore resources, such as tutoring?
- ___ **5. Do you celebrate** every sign of your teen's progress?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are taking positive steps to help your struggling student. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Have an open discussion with your teenager about hazing



When your high school student joins an academic club or is selected for a sports team, the band or other organization, it's rewarding to know that his hard work has paid off.

However, sometimes groups or individuals decide to have new members prove themselves in ways that are not appropriate or approved by the school. These activities are considered *hazing*.

Make it a point to:

- **Talk to your teen** about how he should be treated. Let him know that he should not have to be hazed to be welcomed into a group. And remind him that he should not do something he knows is wrong in order to be accepted by a group.
- **Let your teen know** that hazing is against school policy and, in many

cases, against the law. Everyone involved in hazing can get in trouble—those who are hazing, those who consent to being hazed, and students who witness hazing and do not report it.

- **Ask questions.** Is your teen aware of any hazing activities going on in school? Has he been asked to keep a secret or to do anything that his coach or club adviser is not aware of? Let your teen know that you are available to talk if he has any concerns. And if he is uncomfortable talking to you, encourage him to talk to another trusted adult.
- **Stay informed** about any activities that will take place off school property and keep in touch with the chaperones.
- **Speak up.** If you are concerned about an event or activity, contact the school immediately.

Provide structure and discipline to help your high schooler thrive



Your teen has matured emotionally, intellectually and physically since her elementary school days, but she still has a long way to go. The part of her brain that controls impulses and helps her make good decisions is not yet fully mature. That's one reason why teens need structure and discipline.

Your efforts to teach your teen self-control will pay off at home and at school. Here are some guidelines:

- **Be firm, yet flexible,** with your teen. Discuss family rules and make sure she understands the consequences of breaking them. Consider granting her more freedom as she shows she can handle more responsibility.
- **Always know where your teen is,** who she is with, what she is doing and when she will be home.
- **Remember the difference** between an explanation and an excuse. Your teen's age and developing brain may explain some of her behavior. However, they are not excuses for being rude or defiant.
- **Focus on the big issues,** such as schoolwork and respect for others. Try not to nag your teen about the smaller issues, such as the occasional messy room.
- **Don't take outbursts personally.** When your teen acts first and thinks later, blurts out the wrong thing or is moody, it is not necessarily because she wants to hurt you.

Q: My son is overweight and now that he's in high school, the other students are teasing him. He doesn't want to ride on the bus to school. He says no one will sit with him because he's too fat. He has even started cutting gym class. What can I do?

Questions & Answers

A: Sadly, your son is not the only student facing this issue. Students who are overweight are often taunted by classmates.

What's happening to your son is bullying—which has a negative effect on his self-esteem and his academic achievement. It's important to take this issue seriously.

To support your son:

- **Talk to him.** Sometimes, kids who are the victims of bullying start to feel that it's their fault. Let him know you're on his side and always available to listen.
- **Help him focus** on his strengths and interests. Find ways for him to spend more time on these activities. He'll feel a sense of accomplishment because he's doing something well. He may also have a chance to meet kids who share his interests.
- **Have him talk** with another adult. He should certainly talk to the gym teacher about why he is avoiding class. The teacher needs to know what's going on in the locker room so he can stop it. Your son should also talk with his counselor.
- **Make a plan** for healthy family living. Talk with a doctor to set appropriate goals. Can your family make better food choices? Can you add more activity to your day? The results won't be immediate, but over time, you and your teen may see a big change.

It Matters: Homework & Study Skills

Habits can help teens manage homework



Busy students must learn to set priorities in order to meet all of their responsibilities. But this doesn't come naturally

for many teens.

To help your teen develop habits that will help him stay on top of all he has to do, encourage him to:

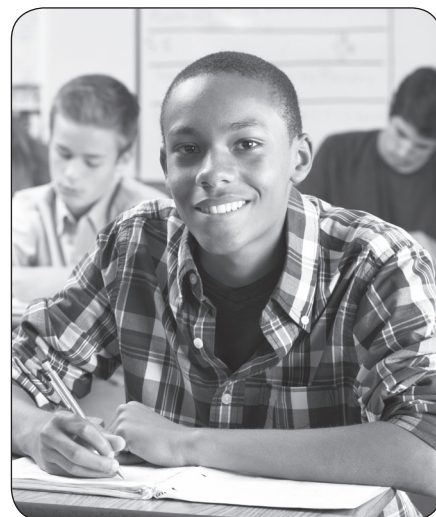
- **Use a planner.** Teens have a lot on their minds. And when something gets forgotten, it's more likely to be an English reading assignment than the lyrics to a favorite song. So make sure your teen has—and uses—a planner. He should write down every assignment. Check regularly to see that he does.
- **Use electronics only as a backup.** Many teachers post assignments and deadlines online. Those are great in a pinch, but a planner will help your teen see the big picture: “I have a math test *and* an English paper, both due on Tuesday!”
- **Put after-school commitments** in the planner. That way, your teen can see which nights he's busiest. If a big project is due on Friday and he has a soccer game Thursday night, he'll see he must finish the project by Wednesday night.
- **Expect the unexpected** when working on projects. If he waits until the night before the paper is due to check out a book from the library, it may not be available. Planning ahead is a great habit to help your teen develop!

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

Your teen can conquer math tests with these test-taking tips

Even students who have done their homework and studied can get nervous when they take a math test. To help your teen do his best, share these math test-taking strategies:

- **Look it over.** Your teen should take a minute or two to look over the whole test. Have him put a check beside problems he knows he can solve.
- **Start with the easy ones.** Getting them out of the way will leave more time for the tougher ones. It will also build his confidence.
- **Use the clock.** In a 50-minute class period, your teen should not spend 10 minutes working on a question that's only worth five points. He shouldn't spend too much time on one problem if it means he won't get to the others.
- **Show all work.** This shows the teacher what your teen does know.



Even if he doesn't get the right answer, the teacher may award him some credit.

- **Don't waste time erasing.** Instead, he should cross through the work he wants the teacher to ignore.
- **Ask, “Does this make sense?”** about every answer.

Share strategies to help your high schooler get organized



Your teen has a big test tomorrow and she can't find her notes. She may have left them in her locker. Or, did she accidentally throw them away? Either way, she doesn't have them—and she needs to use them to study.

Being organized is vital to your teen's school success. To promote organization, teach her to:

- **Organize her study space.** If she can't find her math book, she'll have to waste time looking for it.
- **Use sticky notes.** She can place one on the spine of each book she needs to bring home. She can also use them to jot down important reminders.
- **Prepare for tomorrow tonight!** Have your teen take time each night to prepare for the next day. She can make her lunch, put her homework in her backpack and place her gym shoes by the door.
- **Clean out her backpack** every Friday. She should throw away trash and file school papers.