

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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## Help your high schooler keep grades in perspective

**S**tudies consistently show that pressure to get good grades is one of the biggest causes of stress for today's high school students.

But experts say that as significant as grades are, they are not the only indicators of future success. It's more important, many agree, to have a healthy attitude toward grades and a balanced outlook on life.

To put grades in perspective:

- **Be clear about the message** you're sending. Sometimes, teens think that parents want them to get good grades at any cost—which can lead to cheating.
- **Let your teen know** that your love does not depend on a straight-A report card. Tell her that you are proud of her when she finishes a challenging project or brings up a grade in a tough subject.
- **Have your teen focus** on doing her best, not being the best. Encourage her to strive for personal excellence rather than perfection. Teach her to value the knowledge she gains in her classes—and not to focus solely on grades.
- **Keep pressure about college** in perspective. Yes, it is hard to get into select colleges and universities. But there are many wonderful schools out there. Assure your teen that you'll work together to find a school that's a great fit.

## Strategies help students have math success



You can help your teen achieve math success by sharing these five proven strategies:

1. **Ask questions.** Most teens are hesitant to ask questions in class. Remind your teen that if one person has a question, there are probably others who are wondering the same thing.
2. **Don't fall behind.** Math builds on what was learned before. Remind your teen to do his homework every day.
3. **Get a study buddy.** Suggest your teen find a math study partner. They can talk through problem-solving strategies together.
4. **Go online.** Your teen can type in a math concept and find helpful explanations.
5. **Read ahead.** If the teacher will go over chapter four tomorrow, have your teen read it tonight. Then have him try to solve some problems in the textbook. He will realize what he doesn't understand—which will motivate him to pay attention in class the next day.

## Show your teen how to respond to negative peer pressure



Sometimes, simply saying *no* isn't enough to stand up to negative peer pressure. Arm your teen with a variety of strategies for turning down things she does not want to do.

Your teen could:

- **Offer personal reasons:** "I'm working hard to make the varsity soccer team. I don't want to screw that up with drugs."
- **Talk about what could happen.** "Sorry, the last person who got caught skipping school was suspended. I can't risk that."
- **Be dismissive.** Your teen could simply roll her eyes, shake her head and walk away.
- **Blame you.** "If my mom finds out, she will freak out and I will get grounded. It's just not worth it!"
- **Suggest something else.** "I was planning to see a movie tonight. Want to come with me instead of going to that party?"
- **Try a little pressure of her own.** "Do you really want to smoke weed? Everyone will think you're a stoner."
- **Stay away.** Someone who repeatedly tries to get your teen into trouble is no friend at all. Suggest that your teen consider avoiding the person, at least for the time being.

**"It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are."**

—e.e. cummings

## Studying a foreign language has many benefits for teens



Many students consider foreign language courses as something they are required take to earn a diploma. Help your teen see the many benefits of learning to speak another language.

- Learning a foreign language:
- **Helps your teen** do better in his native language. For English-speaking students, a new language sharpens English vocabulary, grammar and writing skills.
- **Improves your teen's memory.** It gives him practice in speaking and listening.
- **Prepares your teen** for the world outside of school. A new language exposes him to another culture and its traditions. It also opens the door to more career options.
- To support your teen's efforts in a foreign language course:
- **Ask him to teach you** a few simple phrases. Use them around the house.
- **Stay involved** in his homework. Ask your teen how he is doing at least once week.
- **Look for news** and TV stories about the country whose language he is studying.
- **Go to the library** and check out videos, music and books in that language.
- **Look for festivals** and cultural events related to the language he is studying. Make plans to attend one together.

## Are you instilling your family values in your teenager?



As children become teenagers, parents still play an important role in shaping their values.

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if you are instilling your family values in your teenager:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you take advantage** of everyday opportunities to discuss your values?
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you model the values** you want your teen to develop? If you value compassion, for example, you are kind to others.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you look for ways** to put your values into action—such as through volunteering or helping out a neighbor?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you compliment** your teen when you see him modeling your family's values?
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you point out** people you see on the news or around your neighborhood who are practicing their values?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are instilling your family values in your teen. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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## Time lines can be helpful tools for teens when studying history



Your teen is reading about the Russian Revolution. But she's having trouble remembering all those names and dates. In history, cause and effect matter, so it's important for students to put things in order.

Creating a time line can help. Time lines make it easier to see how one thing led to another and how much time passed between events. They also help students put ideas into context.

As your teen studies history, ask her to create a time line for each significant event. She should:

- **Set boundaries.** When did the event begin? End? If your teen is studying the Russian Revolution, it's not necessary to begin the time

line with the fall of the Roman Empire. It's easier to stick with the time period outlined in the history book.

- **Identify the important events.** Briefly summarize the key points: Who was involved, what happened, when did the event take place?
- **Include illustrations for events.** Here's a case where a picture really is worth a thousand words.
- **Use different colors.** For example, use red for the February Revolution and orange for the October Revolution.

The completed time line should help your teen "see" how events unfolded. To review for a test, have her try to rewrite the time line from memory.

**Source:** L. Zwier and G. Mathes, *Study Skills for Success*, University of Michigan Press.

**Q:** My teen tends to put things off. If she has a big paper due, she waits until the night before—sometimes, until very late on the night before. She's bright, but her grades suffer. How can I help my daughter break the procrastination habit?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** We all put some things off. But when it gets to be a habit, as it has for your daughter, procrastination can have serious consequences.

To put an end to your teen's procrastination habit:

- **Ask her why** she puts things off. Is she afraid of failing? Does she simply like the thrill of dashing something off at the last minute? Is she just unmotivated? Whatever the cause, she needs to work on changing this habit before she gets to college or the workplace.
- **Help her divide large projects** into smaller chunks. Then have her set deadlines for each chunk. She may still wait until close to each deadline to finish each part, but bit by bit she'll get the job done. And once she gets started on a project, she'll find that it will be easier to keep working.

As your teen finishes each task, she should reward herself with an enjoyable task, for example playing a favorite online game.

- **Help her see assignments** in terms of her long-term goals. Learning how to study and getting better grades will help her with her goal of being successful in high school and in college.

## Encourage your teen to keep a college and career portfolio



Creating a college and career readiness portfolio is a valuable step in your teen's college and career preparation. A portfolio can be a box, folder or computer file—a place where your teen can keep a record of everything to meet his future goals.

Having information stored in one place will be helpful—especially when it's time to fill out scholarship, college and job applications.

So what type of information should your teen include in his portfolio? He should include details about:

- **Academics.** Your teen can list the courses he has taken and plans to take in order to meet high school graduation and college admission requirements. He should write down the final grades he receives

in his classes so he can calculate his grade point average. He can also list standardized test scores.

- **Extracurricular activities.** Your teen can list all of the activities he participates in, the dates of participation and any leadership positions he holds. He should include things like school clubs, student organizations, volunteer work, sports, part-time jobs and internships.
- **Awards and accomplishments.** Your teen should keep track of the accomplishments and awards he earns throughout his school career. Being on the honor roll, winning an essay contest, advancing to a state DECA competition and being selected to showcase art are just a few examples of the kinds of things to include.

# It Matters: Discipline

## Ask yourself questions when setting rules



As your teen grows older, she needs fewer rules. But you still need to set limits on what is allowed. The key to setting effective rules for your teen is balance. She needs independence but you still need to keep some control.

Rules will be different for each family, but here are some questions to ask yourself as you are setting rules for your teen:

- **Has my teen had** a chance to talk about this rule with me? Teens should have input about rules, although parents should always make the final decision.
- **Will this rule help** my teen develop independence? Teens need to learn how to think for themselves. They need a chance to make choices and live with them. But they can't handle *every* choice. For example, by high school, teens can decide *when* and *where* to study, but not *whether* to study.
- **Am I setting an example** for following this rule? For example, if you don't wear your seat belt when driving in a car, you shouldn't be surprised to discover your teen isn't wearing one when he is driving with his friends.
- **Does my teen know** what will happen if the rule is violated? Consequences for breaking a rule should be established and discussed *before* the rule is broken.

## Effective consequences are natural, related and reasonable

Consequences are an important part of discipline. They show your teen that his actions lead to results.

Experts agree that consequences are most effective when they are:

- **Natural.** The best consequences happen naturally. Example: Your teen doesn't do his homework. Natural consequence: He earns a bad grade. However, when a natural consequence threatens your teen's safety, don't let it happen.
- **Related.** The consequence should relate directly to what your teen did. Example: Your teen comes home with an empty gas tank—again. The rule is to fill the tank before returning the car.



Related consequence: He can't use the car for one week.

- **Reasonable.** Example: Your teen comes home after curfew. Reasonable consequence: He has to stay home next Saturday night. Not reasonable: He's grounded for two months.

## Find out how friends, TV and social media influence your teen



Even though you have a big effect on your teen's life, you aren't the only one influencing her behavior and her attitude about important things, such as school.

Make sure you are paying attention to outside influences that affect your teen, such as:

- **Social media.** Ask your teen about the social media sites she belongs to—Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. Together, look at some of the things she and her friends post online. Are the photos, comments and videos appropriate? Do they reflect your teen's values?
- **Friends.** Try to get to know your teen's friends and their families. Allow her to invite friends over occasionally. Talk to your teen about what she and her friends do for fun. Are her friends planning to go to college? If not, what are their plans?
- **Television.** What shows does your teen watch? Watch some of her favorite shows with her, and use them as a starting point for a conversation. Do the characters make good decisions? Ask her why she likes the shows.