

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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## Set your teen up for success by focusing on attendance

One of the best ways to support your teen's education is to make sure he attends school every day. Attendance is important. Your teen can't learn if he isn't in school.

Teens who miss school frequently are more likely to:

- **Drop out.** Missing too many classes is often the first sign that a teen is giving up on school.
- **Get into trouble.** One study found that 78 percent of people 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:

- **Talk to your teen** about 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 just as important.

- **Avoid scheduling medical** and other appointments for your teen during school hours.
- **Communicate with teachers.** If your teen must miss a class, have him talk to the teacher to see how you can all work together to make sure your teen stays on track.
- **Set a good example.** Make an effort to 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, [niscw.com/high\\_truancy](http://niscw.com/high_truancy).

## Reinforce your teen's learning with real life



One way to support what your teen is learning in school is to connect what the teacher is

teaching in the classroom with real-life activities. Talk with your teen about the classes she's taking, and then look for practical activities that relate to what she's learning.

For example, to make a connection with:

- **Math,** ask your teen to help you plan a monthly budget for the family. Or, when you go to gas up your car, ask her to estimate how much a full, half or quarter tank of gas will cost.
- **History,** visit a local museum, battlefield or monument. Or, if your teen is taking a modern history class, have her speak to someone who is familiar with the time period she's studying.
- **A foreign language,** watch a movie or read a children's book in that language together. Or, challenge your teen to translate set-up instructions from a manual in that language.

# Share the facts about underage drinking with your high schooler



According to health experts, 60 percent of teens have had at least one drink by age 18.

And research shows that teenage drinking poses serious health and safety risks.

For example:

- **Teens who start drinking** before the age of 15 are twice as likely to become addicted as those who wait until they are 21. Students who drink are also much more likely to commit suicide.
  - **Alcohol increases** impulsive behavior and provokes teens to make stupid decisions that can lead to serious injury or death.
  - **Underage drinking increases** teens' risk of physical and sexual assault.
- So what can parents do?
- **Check where your teen** is going and with whom. If she is going to a party,

call the parents to be sure they will be in the house and that no alcohol will be served.

- **Remind your teen** *never* to get into a car with someone who has been drinking. Develop a code she can use when she calls you that means "Please come get me!"
- **Watch your teen** carefully for signs she may be depressed. Sometimes, teens use alcohol as a way to medicate themselves.

**Source:** "Underage Drinking," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, [niasw.com/high\\_underage2](http://niasw.com/high_underage2).

**"Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success."**

—Swami Sivananda

# Memory-boosting strategies can maximize your teen's learning



Memory skills, especially long-term memory skills, are critical for learning.

Long-term memory is what builds the "store of knowledge" we draw on all our lives.

To help your teen boost her memory power, share these four strategies:

1. **Look at the big picture.** If she knows an upcoming test is on Chapter Four, your teen should spend most of her time on that chapter. However, she should also take a few moments to look at the summaries of the surrounding chapters. Doing so tells her how Chapter Four relates to the whole unit. Understanding the context will help information stick in her mind.
2. **Put information** on index cards and quiz herself with them frequently. This tried-and-true method strengthens her ability to recall the information she needs to remember.
3. **Focus hardest** on the middle part of reading material, because our brains remember the beginning and end parts best.
4. **Study and then rest** or sleep. The brain is never asleep. While your teen's body is getting much needed rest, her brain will still be working on sorting out and retaining the material she fed it just before going to bed.

**Source:** E. Jensen, *Student Success Secrets*, Barron's Educational Series.

# Are you helping your teen handle after-school time?



Teens spend twice as much time out of the classroom as in it.

And studies show that teens who use their after-school hours wisely tend to do better in school.

Are you helping your teen make the most of after-school hours? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you know** where your teen goes after school?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you ask your teen** to check in with you when he gets home from school if you are not at home?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Have you encouraged** your teen to join a school club or sport he enjoys? Extracurricular activities benefit teens in many ways.
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you limit** your teen's recreational screen time after school?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Does your teen** have a regular study time? Do you check to see that homework is finished?

**How well are you doing?**

If most of your answers are *yes*, you're helping your teen use after-school hours wisely. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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## 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 preparation for life after

high school. A portfolio can be a box, folder or computer file—a place where your teen can record everything he's doing 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 should also list any standardized test scores.

- **Extracurricular activities.** Your teen can write down 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, accomplishments and skills.** Being on the honor roll, winning an essay contest, becoming proficient in a computer program, advancing to a state DECA competition and being selected to showcase art are a few examples of the kinds of things to include.

## Ask your teen to be responsible for limiting digital device use



According to the Pew Research Center, 54% of teens say they spend too much time on 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 his phone for good, you can help him learn to limit his usage responsibly. Here's how:

- **Encourage him to spend** one day tracking the number of times he picks up his phone or other digital device and the amount of time he spends on it.

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

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

Source: J. Jiang, "How Teens and Parents Navigate Screen Time and Device Distractions," Pew Research Center, [nswc.com/high\\_addiction](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2018/08/01/screen-time-addiction/).

**Q:** My daughter 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:** Most teens put things off at one time or another. But some teens are regular procrastinators. In addition to driving their parents crazy, these teens end up creating a lot of unnecessary stress—and they usually don't perform as well academically as they could.

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

- **Talk to her.** 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? Or, is she just unmotivated? Whatever the cause, let her know that she needs to work on changing this habit.
- **Show her how to divide** large projects into smaller pieces. Then, have her set deadlines for each piece. She may still wait until close to deadlines to finish each part, but bit by bit she'll get the job done.

Once your teen gets started on a project, she'll find that it will be easier to keep working. As she finishes each task, she should reward herself with an enjoyable activity.

- **Encourage positive self-talk.** Saying things like, "There's no time like the present" can be very motivating!
- **Help her see assignments** in terms of her long-term goals. Learning how to manage her time will help her be successful in high school and in college.

# It Matters: The Home-School Team

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



Whether it's your teen's first year in high school or his last, there 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 school 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 things like 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 decide *when* to do homework, but not *whether* to do it.
- **Check with his counselor** to make sure your teen is on track to graduate and attend college. Even if he isn't sure he wants to go to college, he should take courses that leave that option open.

## Discipline at home and school is crucial for academic success

**N**o 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. Expect your teen to:

- **Obey school rules.** Read them together and let your teen know you support the school's discipline policies.
- **Treat teachers with respect.** Your teen can show respect by coming to class prepared and on time, completing assignments promptly and participating in class discussions.
- **Follow 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 consequences for breaking rules. Enforce the consequences consistently.

## Support your teen's learning with a 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.