

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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## Parental expectations set the stage for academic success

**R**esearch shows that parental expectations have a significant impact on high school students' achievement. One study found that:

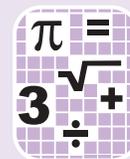
- **Teens strive to reach** parents' expectations of them. If you believe in your teen and expect him to succeed in school, he is likely to have higher academic achievement.
- **Teens' expectations** for themselves begin to match the expectations their parents have for them. If you make it clear to your teen what you want of him, by saying things like "I want you to do well in school," he will begin to have the same expectations for himself.

To inspire your teen:

- **Talk to him** about what you want him to achieve in high school—and ask him what he expects to achieve.
- **Help him set attainable goals**—such as improving a grade in a certain class.
- **Discuss the future.** Compare your dreams for your teen with his own. Talk about potential careers or college plans. Tell him that you support him and know he can succeed in whatever he does.

**Source:** J.M. Froiland and M.L. Davison, "Parental expectations and school relationships as contributors to adolescents' positive outcomes," *Social Psychology of Education*, Springer.

## Strategies help students do better in math



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 her 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 search for 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 her try to solve some problems in the textbook. She will realize what she doesn't understand—which will give her incentive to pay attention in class the next day.

## Ask yourself these questions when setting rules for your teen



As your teen grows older, he needs fewer rules. But he's not an adult yet, and some limits still apply.

The key to setting effective rules for your teen is balance. He needs independence but you still need to keep some control.

Rules will be different for each family, but some general questions are important to consider as you are setting rules for your high schooler:

- **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** by 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 he violates this rule? It's important to discuss and establish consequences for misbehavior *before* the rule is broken.

**“You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.”**

—Franklin P. Jones

## Experts say teen brains may be primed for power struggles



You are determined that your teen will finish her homework right now. She is equally determined to spend

another 30 minutes on her phone.

Sound familiar? Teens and parents regularly find themselves locked in power struggles. Brain research suggests that these power struggles may be because teens' brains are not fully developed.

An area of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex acts as the brain's CEO. It helps adults regulate their behavior.

An adult would think, “If I say that to my boss, I'm likely to get

fired. Maybe I'd better keep that thought to myself.” But the prefrontal cortex develops late—so many teens lack that ability to control their impulses.

So what does that mean for you and your teen? Avoid power struggles when you can. Don't give in to all of your teen's demands, of course. Instead, look for ways to involve her in decisions. For example, asking, “What time will you be able to finish your homework so we can go to the football game tonight?” may eliminate a fight—and still get the homework finished.

**Source:** *The Teen Brain: 6 Things to Know*, The National Institute of Mental Health, [nismc.com/high\\_teenbrain](http://nismc.com/high_teenbrain).

## Are you helping your teen develop good character?



As children become teenagers, families still play an important role in shaping their character.

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

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

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are instilling a strong moral code in your teen. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Address common attendance excuses from your teenager



You've heard them all—every excuse in the book for why your high school student should be allowed to stay home from school. He's even invented some new ones that weren't around back when you were trying to pull one over on your parents.

Here is a list of common excuses teens use to get out of going to school—and ways to respond to them:

- **“I don't feel good.”** This excuse has been around for as long as, well, school itself. Unless your teen can describe his symptoms exactly or he has a fever, send him to school.
- **“If I could just sleep for an extra hour, I'd be so much more productive.”** Respond that he can go to bed an hour earlier tonight.

- **“I have a project due at 2 p.m. that I haven't finished yet.”** Let your teen know that he needs to be more organized. He isn't allowed to skip classes just to finish an assignment for another class.
- **“I need to rest before the big game tonight.”** School comes before sports and other extracurricular activities. Big events are no exception.
- **“Juniors aren't supposed to go to school today. I forgot to tell you.”** If this could be possible, call the school to make sure.

If your teen is constantly trying to stay home from school, it may be the sign of a larger problem. Speak to your teen's teachers or school counselor if you are worried about his reluctance to attend school.

# Time lines are helpful tools for teens 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. Suggest that she stick with the time period outlined in the history book.

- **Identify the important events.** Have her summarize the key points: who was involved, what happened, and when the event took place.
- **Include illustrations for events.** Here's a case where a picture really is worth a thousand words.
- **Use different colors.** For example, your teen might 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 daughter has always been shy. I thought she'd grow out of it but, if anything, it's getting worse. She's a good student and a great artist. But put her with a group of teens and she just freezes up. What can I do?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Your daughter is not alone. In fact, some studies show that most students are shy—at least in some situations.

Experts tell us that shyness doesn't go away. So the way you help your daughter deal with her shyness is critical. Focus on the positives. Your teen is probably a great listener. She may have good insights into people. Emphasize those strengths. Help her accept herself the way she is, while still giving her the skills she needs to get along in the world.

To help your teen cope:

- **Reassure her.** Many shy kids think they're the only person in the world who has trouble in social situations. Let your teen know that she's not alone.
- **Let her practice speaking up.** Encourage her to share her views and to be more vocal in family settings.
- **Have her practice looking people in the eye and smiling when she meets them.**
- **Tell her to prepare a question or two to ask when she meets someone new.**
- **Find ways for her to work with other kids in small groups.** Is there an art club she can join? Could she paint the sets for the school play?

As she learns to use her strengths, your teen will grow in confidence. She may never be the center of attention. But she'll grow up to be a capable, if quiet, young woman.

# It Matters: Test Success

## Teach your teen this five-day study program



A simple study program can help high school students study for all kinds of tests—from history unit tests to

math final exams.

Encourage your teen to follow these steps:

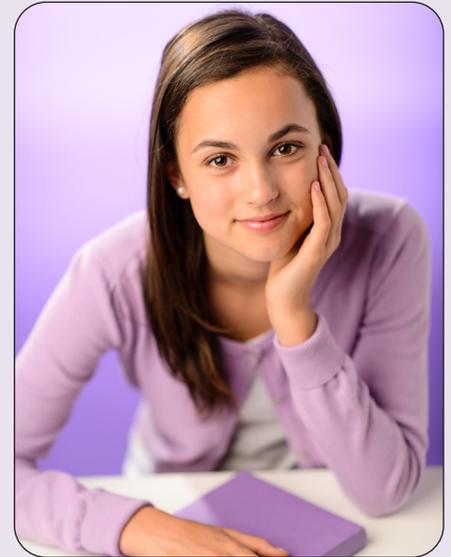
- **Four days before the test**, gather everything that will be covered on the test. This includes class notes, outlines, quizzes and handouts. Arrange them by date.
- **Three days before the test**, read everything over. Make a list of questions likely to be on the test. Did the teacher spend four days on the defeat of the Spanish Armada? Odds are, that will show up on test day. Make flash cards of facts to memorize or create a quiz, and practice recalling the information. (Visit [quizlet.com](http://quizlet.com) for free online study tools.)
- **Two days before the test**, look through the textbook. What are the major titles? What are the most important topics? Make a list of questions that may show up on the test. Now, choose several of these possible test questions and make notes of how to answer them.
- **One day before the test**, create and take a self-quiz. Try to recall and write memorized facts correctly. Apply math formulas by using them to solve sample problems.
- **The day of the test**, repeat the previous day's tasks. Collect and bring all allowed materials (notes, calculators, etc.) to class.

## Four strategies can reduce your high schooler's test anxiety

**D**oes your teen's stomach do flip-flops at the thought of a huge test? Although you can't take the test for her, there are lots of ways you can help her get ready.

You can:

1. **Chat with your teen.** Ask her why she's so nervous about the test. Is the material too hard? Does she not understand it? Sometimes just getting her concerns off her chest can make the test less scary.
2. **Help your teen make a study schedule.** Encourage her to set aside study time on each of the days leading up to it. (Check out the five-day study plan to the left.)
3. **Create a comfy study spot.** Carve out a quiet, well-lit place at home where your teen can study. Make sure she has all the supplies she needs—including a healthy snack—when she sits down to hit the books.



4. **Remind her of her strengths.** "I know you're worried about the big science test, but remember how well you did on the last one?" Focus on the positives and let her know you believe she can be successful.

## Show your teenager how to prepare physically for tests



Your teen has studied for days leading up to a big test—but he's not truly ready until he also prepares physically.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Brains work best when they are well-rested. Make sure your teen gets at least eight hours of sleep the night before a test.
- **Set an alarm clock.** He can set a backup alarm, too, if he's concerned he may oversleep.
- **Dress comfortably.** Sometimes, classrooms are too hot or too cold, so he should dress in layers.
- **Eat breakfast.** Food fuels his body and his mind, giving him energy and helping him focus. Your teen should avoid a big meal, however, which could make him groggy.
- **Show up early.** He should allow himself at least five minutes before the test begins to get settled—get out his pen, pencil, calculator, etc. and take a few deep breaths.