

# High School Parents

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## Help your high school student keep grades in perspective

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

But experts know that as significant as grades are, they are not the only indicators of future success. It's also important to have a positive attitude about learning, a strong work ethic and a balanced outlook on life.

To help your high schooler maintain perspective:

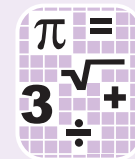
- **Be clear about the message** you are sending. Too much pressure from parents to get perfect grades can lead to cheating.
- **Let your teen know** that success does not depend on a straight-A report card. Finishing a challenging

project and bringing up a grade in a tough subject are reasons to be proud and celebrate. Encourage your high school student to strive for personal excellence rather than perfection.

- **Teach your teen** to value the knowledge gained in classes—learning is the point of education.
- **Keep pressure about college** in perspective. Yes, it is hard to get into some selective 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.

**Source:** "Parents' Values and Children's Perceived Pressure: Topical Research Series #4," The Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth.

## Share tips for doing better in math classes



You can support math achievement by encouraging your teen to use 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. **Stay on top of assignments.** Math builds on what was learned before. Remind your teen to complete assignments every day.
3. **Get a study buddy.** Suggest that 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 your teen try to solve some problems in the textbook. Reading ahead helps students realize what they don't yet understand—which helps them ask better questions in class the next day.

# Let your teen know that there is no such thing as ‘no homework’



When teens are in high school, there is always something they can do to keep up with their schoolwork. So if your teen comes home from school without any assignments to complete, suggest spending 30 minutes to an hour on one of the following activities:

- **Get started** on a long-term project or paper. It's never too early to begin. Talk about how beneficial it is to begin working on something when there's less pressure.
- **Review a chapter** or read ahead. Students are often amazed at how much better the information sticks in their mind if they study it when they're relaxed.
- **Read over class notes.** Reviewing notes regularly reminds students what they've learned and gives them an opportunity to fill in any material they may have left out.

- **Create a practice test** from books and notes. Then, you could offer to quiz your teen.
- **Practice math problems.** Or, look up some vocabulary words the teacher hasn't yet assigned.
- **Write something.** It could be a story, a poem, a journal entry or a letter to a friend.
- **Read something.** Whether it's a classic book, graphic novel or a news magazine, *any* reading is worthwhile.

Source: R. Dellabough, *101 Ways To Get Straight As*, Troll Associates.

**“People who use time wisely spend it on activities that advance their overall purpose in life.”**

—John C. Maxwell

# Experts say teen brains may be primed for power struggles



You are determined that your teen will finish doing chores right now. Your teen is equally determined to spend another 30 minutes scrolling through social media.

Sound familiar? Teens and parents regularly find themselves locked in power struggles. Brain research suggests that these power struggles may occur 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 isn't fully developed until age 24—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 your teen in decisions. For example, asking, “What time will you finish your chores so we can go to the game tonight?” may eliminate a fight—and still get those chores completed.

Source: *The Teen Brain: 6 Things to Know*, The National Institute of Mental Health.

# Are you boosting your teenager's concentration?



As the second half of the school year begins, students' concentration may start to diminish.

Are you helping your teen stay focused? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- \_\_\_ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to participate in enjoyable focus-building activities? For some kids, this might be reading; for others, it could be sports or chess club.
- \_\_\_ **2. Do you set limits** on recreational screen time? Extended time in front of digital devices can reduce your teen's concentration.
- \_\_\_ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to finish tasks and offer praise for doing so?
- \_\_\_ **4. Do you discourage** multitasking? It's difficult to concentrate on assignments if your teen is also watching Netflix and texting friends.
- \_\_\_ **5. Do you minimize** interruptions when your teen is working?

**How well are you doing?**

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are helping your teen maintain solid concentration. Mostly *no* answers? Check the quiz for some suggestions.

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# Help your teen follow through with academic resolutions



January is the month for making New Year's resolutions. People plan to do things like adopt a healthier diet, get more active or earn better grades. But by February, most have scrapped their resolutions.

Discuss the following ways to keep New Year's resolutions and turn your teen's academic goals into realities:

- **Remember Janus.** The Roman god Janus, who gave his name to this month, looked both forward and back. That's a good first step to take. Ask your teen: *What goals did you meet during the past year? How were you able to achieve them? What lessons did you learn that will be helpful in the new year?*

- **Put the goal in writing** and be sure your teen includes a deadline. Written goals serve as a visual reminder for students.
- **Envision the goal.** What would your teen's success look like? Studies show that the more vivid a picture students can paint in their mind's eye, the more likely they are to achieve it.
- **Break it down.** Big goals can't be achieved in one day. Brainstorm together about specific steps your teen will need to take along the way.
- **Celebrate progress.** It's not just the end result that matters. Cheer your teen on for working hard and being persistent.

Source: B. Greene, "The Psychology Of Writing Down Goals," New Tech Northwest.

# Share six simple editing tips to improve a piece of writing



Being able to communicate effectively is a critical skill that all students need. Before turning in a paper or answering an essay question, your teen should take time to review it. Careless errors can negatively affect your teen's grade.

When editing a piece of writing, your teen should:

1. **Track with a finger.** Encourage your teen to proofread slowly, word by word, to check for mistakes. Sometimes the brain fills in missing words.
2. **Be concise.** Sometimes students use "filler" words to increase word count. Your teen should eliminate unnecessary words and phrases, such as *needless to say*, *basically*, etc.
3. **Check word usage.** Many English words sound alike. Students sometimes confuse words like *there* and *their*, and *affect* and *effect*. Spell check programs won't catch those errors.
4. **Proofread punctuation.** Do sentences end with a period or question mark? Are commas used correctly? Your teen should check for proper use of apostrophes. (Pay attention to the difference between *its* and *it's*. The latter means "it is.")
5. **Add support.** Does the essay include interesting examples? Is there support for the main idea?
6. **Add pizzazz.** All writing needs a little oomph. Suggest that your teen use interesting details or a interesting point of view to make the writing unique. Varying sentence structure will ensure the piece holds the reader's attention.

**Q:** My teen is a junior in high school and can't seem to make a decision about anything! How can I help my teen learn how to make responsible decisions?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** As kids grow up, they will be required to make all sorts of decisions—some big and some small. Decision-making is challenging for most teens. But for some, it can lead to almost total paralysis.

To help your teen learn to make decisions:

- **Offer plenty of opportunities** to make low-risk decisions. Suppose your teen is responsible for mowing the lawn every week. On Monday, say, "The lawn needs to be mowed before this weekend. You decide when you want to mow it." Don't mention it during the week. Simply let your teen decide when to mow the lawn.
- **Share helpful strategies.** When your teen has to make a decision, suggest making a list of the positives and negatives for each option. Sometimes, seeing things written down can make the choice easier.
- **Remind your teen** that mistakes are opportunities to learn. Some teens are afraid to make a decision because they are worried about making the wrong one. Let your teen know that in life, things don't always work out the way we plan—and that's OK. People learn something from every choice they make, even if it's simply what *not to do* next time.
- **Suggest that your teen** set deadlines for big decisions. "You have until Tuesday to decide if you want to accept Mr. Smith's job offer."

# It Matters: Motivation

## Give your teen motivation to attend school



The older some kids get, the harder it is to motivate them to go to school—and the more important going to

school becomes.

When high school students skip class, they may just think they're getting themselves out of that day's work. They need to know that they may be getting themselves out of much more—such as future opportunities they might want.

Going to school is not just about today, this grading period or even this school year. It's an investment in your student's future.

To reinforce school attendance:

- **Make your expectations clear.** Let your teen know that you expect on-time attendance in every class every day. Talk about why you think it's important.
- **Avoid having your teen babysit** younger children during school hours. Schedule medical appointments outside of school hours when possible.
- **Be consistent.** Avoid sending conflicting messages by letting your teen miss school for unnecessary reasons, such as to finish homework.
- **Provide incentives.** These can be weekend outings or special time with you. Make sure they're things your teen views as rewards.
- **Monitor absences.** Call the teacher or school counselor if you suspect your teen may be skipping school or classes. Review the attendance marked on the report card or online portal.

## Lack of effort is often a sign that your teen is struggling

**Y**ou found out that your teen hasn't been turning in math assignments. Is your student lacking motivation, or is it something else?

A lack of effort can sometimes be a cover-up for a more serious problem. Teens will do a lot to keep parents and teachers from figuring out that they are having trouble with a subject. They'll pretend they don't care. They'll act like the class clown. They'll "forget" to turn in assignments day after day.

If this describes your teen, consider meeting with the teacher to take a closer look. An "I just don't care" attitude may be hiding the fact that your teen needs serious help in that class.

If your teen is struggling, act now. Your teen may be able to work with a tutor, stay after class for extra help



and maybe even take a summer class. Knowing the real problem is the first step to fixing it.

## Boost internal motivation to spark a lifetime of learning



Most people are motivated to learn for both internal reasons (the love of learning) and external reasons (to receive a grade or other reward). But internal motivation is what inspires lifelong learning.

To foster internal motivation:

- **Praise your teen** for progress and for taking challenging classes, rather than just for grades.
- **Help your teen set goals** for mastering subjects. Goals should be set high, but not so high that they are unreachable.
- **Encourage your teen** to review progress towards goals regularly—and to be honest. "I could do better if I studied another 20 minutes each night."
- **Encourage your teen** to try a variety of learning strategies and figure out which ones work best in what circumstance. For example, if your teen remembers vocabulary words better after hearing them, try reading them out loud.
- **Talk about** how you believe in your teen. Say things like, "These questions are very challenging, but I know you'll figure them out."