

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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MORAN SCHOOL  
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*still make the difference!*



## Three healthy habits can help your teen succeed in school

Your teen can't learn if he's too groggy to concentrate. That's why developing healthy habits is critical to his success in school. A commitment to healthy habits will help your teen start each school day ready to learn.

Encourage your teen to:

1. **Eat healthy** and well-balanced meals and snacks. Your teen will benefit from nutritious foods such as whole grains, produce and lean protein. He should eat breakfast every day, even if it is a granola bar or piece of toast in one hand and a banana in the other as he runs out the door.
2. **Get regular exercise.** A strong body, fueled by regular physical activity, will help your teen stay alert during the school day. Your

teen should make sure he gets some sort of exercise every day. Even a short walk in the afternoon after school can reduce stress and help him be ready to tackle his homework.

3. **Get a good night's sleep.** A routine that includes a regular and reasonable bedtime is critical for getting your teen up and out the door to school on time. Teens need plenty of rest in order to function properly throughout the school day. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that teens get between 8.5 and 9.5 hours of sleep each night.

**Source:** K.T. Alvy, *The Positive Parent: Raising Healthy, Happy and Successful Children, Birth-Adolescence*, Teachers College Press and the Center for the Improvement of Child Caring.

## Attendance should always be top priority



Attendance can make the difference between graduating from high school and dropping out.

Educators focus on the importance of attendance, but that message is more effective when you support it at home.

To promote attendance:

- **Talk about it.** Discuss the importance of showing up on time—whether it's at school, a job or an appointment. Set a good example for your teen by always arriving on time.
- **Don't make** staying home a treat. Consider making a "no TV or computer" rule on sick days. She'll be less likely to say she's sick just to get out of going to school. If your teen is really sick, she can stay home, rest and read.
- **Set a goal** and offer a reward for reaching it. Start with a realistic goal at first—like having your teen go to school every single weekday for a month. Decide on a reward for her success. Even something as simple as a weekend lunch together can be a great motivator!

## Four strategies can keep your high school student reading



Reading becomes increasingly important as your teen reaches high school. And the best way to build reading skills is to read often.

To encourage your teen to read:

1. **Make library visits** a regular habit for your family. Encourage your teen to check out books.
2. **Build on his interests.** Encourage your teen to read books, magazines and articles about things he's interested in, from sports to celebrities.
3. **Read what he reads.** If your teen is assigned a novel to read for his English class, get a copy and read

it yourself. This shows your teen you are interested in what he is learning and can lead to some great conversations.

4. **Give it time.** Teens can go through periods where they don't show interest in reading. Time and some encouragement may be all your teen needs to rekindle his desire to read.

**“The best advice I ever got was that knowledge is power and to keep reading.”**

—David Bailey

## Brain research shows teens take risks when peers are watching



She's a responsible kid. So why did she and her friends get in a car and drive *way* too fast? Or skip school when they

knew they would be caught?

Brain researchers have discovered something interesting about the teenage brain. They've learned that teens may actually be wired to make bad decisions and take risks when their friends are watching them.

Researchers asked teens and adults to play a short driving game. They were rewarded for finishing quickly, as long as they followed basic traffic rules. Half the time, the teens and adults played alone. Half the time, they were told that their peers were watching in another room. While they were playing, researchers monitored their brain activity.

The result? When teens thought peers were watching them, they

experienced increased brain activity in certain regions of the brain. At the same time, they took *many* more risks. They drove faster. They ran yellow lights. They were more likely to crash. In other words, just knowing others were watching affected their behavior. *The peer pressure was simply the presence of peers.*

On the other hand, when adults thought peers were watching, their brain activity and behavior did not change.

What does this mean for a parent of a teen? Perhaps most importantly, never *assume* that your teen will make responsible choices when she's with friends. Before she goes out, be sure to review the rules—and help your teen think through the consequences.

**Source:** J. Chein and others, "Peers increase adolescent risk taking by enhancing activity in the brain's reward circuitry," *Developmental Science*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

## Can your teen handle school & a part-time job?



Having a part-time job can help teens learn responsibility. But it can also overwhelm their ability to focus on schoolwork. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to see if your teen is ready to balance school and a job:

- \_\_\_ 1. **Does your teen show** you that she can use time responsibly? Are you confident that she can handle her schoolwork *and* a job?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Have you set a limit** on the total number of hours your teen can work?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Have you told your teen** that if her grades suffer, she will have to quit her job?
- \_\_\_ 4. **Have you and your teen** developed a plan for how she will spend the money she earns?
- \_\_\_ 5. **Have you and your teen** discussed how she will get back and forth to work without disrupting your entire family?

**How well are you doing?**

More *yes* answers mean you and your teen are prepared for her to get a job. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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# Help your teenager uncover hidden strengths and interests



High school gives teens lots of opportunities to learn more about themselves. Help your teen discover his strengths and interests this year by encouraging him to:

- 1. Read.** Reading a variety of material exposes your teen to new ideas and pursuits. Suggest your teen read anything and everything he can.
- 2. Talk to people.** Tell your teen to ask people about their jobs. He should ask what they like best about them. Do any of the jobs sound interesting to him?

Your teen might ask his friends about their hobbies and interests. He could have them teach him a new skill.

- 3. Try new things.** The easiest way to find out if you are good at something is simply to try it. Challenge your teen to join a new organization or club at school. He might take a class online.
- 4. Research.** Suggest your teen go online and search for hobbies and careers that seem interesting to him. He may find something he'd like to try. If he doesn't have access to a computer at home, see if he can use one at the library.

# Teach your teen that persistence leads to success in school & in life



Sometimes it seems easier to give up on a tough assignment than to push through and complete it. However, that is not going to get your teen very far in life. Life is full of difficult jobs and tasks, so it will benefit your teen to learn to be persistent as soon as she can.

Persistence and determination will lead to your teen's success in school. Large projects will look less daunting to her—and her grades will probably improve as a result.

Challenge your teen to see complex projects through to the end. To encourage her:

- **Notice her progress.** Say things like, "You're really coming along with that." Your teen will love the pat on the back.
- **Teach your teen** to cheer herself on. Positive self-talk, such as,

"I am going to do this" or "I can do a great job on this," can see her through the most difficult tasks.

- **Be a role model.** If you've been putting off a big chore, such as cleaning out a closet, decide to do it. Say, "Today, I am going to work until I get this finished." Then keep your word.
- **Offer your help.** If your teen is struggling to complete something, a little help may motivate her to stick with it.
- **Treat your teen** to something special when she finishes a challenging task. You could watch a movie together or cook a fun dinner. Your teen showed persistence through a tough task—she deserves to celebrate!

**Source:** M. Borba, *Parents Do Make a Difference: How to Raise Kids with Solid Character, Strong Minds and Caring Hearts*, Jossey-Bass.

**Q:** My son would make a great secret agent. If he does not want you to know something, he will not talk. Unfortunately, last year he kept the secret that he was in danger of failing math until it was almost too late to do anything. How can I get him to open up about things that are really important?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Experts tell us that the ability to communicate on the job is more important than ever. But there are still many teens—mostly, but not only, boys—who don't want to share anything except on a "need to know" basis.

And as you learned last year, teens don't always have the best judgment about what you need to know. So as the school year starts, you need to work to open up communication with your son—and with the school.

Interestingly, the solution may be to get your son to open up about things that are not so important. So involve him in a project. Take him for a drive. Go for a walk. When the two of you are focused on some other task, conversation can often come more easily.

Talk about everyday things. Talk *with*, not *at* him. And try to do at least as much listening as talking. Let him take the lead in the conversation. If he wants to talk about football, let that be the subject.

Meanwhile, stay in touch with the school. Be sure your teen's teachers know how to contact you. Tell him you will be in touch with his teachers. Your son may never be a chatterbox, but you can learn ways to find out what you need to know.

# It Matters: Responsibility

## Expect your teen to know & follow the school rules



If your teen is caught driving faster than the speed limit, saying, “I didn’t know” won’t keep the police officer

from giving him a ticket. The same is true for school rules. As the new year begins, your teen needs to become aware of the “rules of the road” that affect him when he is in school.

As a parent, you should be sure your teen understands rules about some key areas:

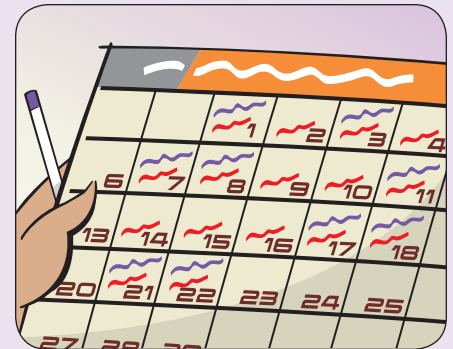
- **Attendance.** What are the consequences for skipping school? For being late? If your teen is home sick, how should you let the school know?
- **Clothing.** Does your teen know what he can—and can’t—wear in school? You don’t want to spend money on clothes that your teen can never wear to school, so make sure he finds out!
- **Homework.** At the beginning of the school year, teachers explain their policies about homework and late assignments. And since rules may vary from class to class, it’s especially important for your teen to understand them.
- **Cell phones.** Many teachers allow cell phones, but require students to turn them off in the classroom. Make sure your teen is aware of the consequences for any cell phone misuse. Emphasize to your teen that he should never use his phone to cheat or to take pictures of classmates without their permission.

## Help your high schooler take more responsibility for learning

It’s 10 p.m. and your teen hasn’t started her homework. She’s been in her room for hours. But between texting her friends and checking Instagram, her total work output so far is zero.

You want your teen to finish her homework but you don’t want to spend every minute looking over her shoulder. To help your teen take responsibility for completing assignments, have her:

1. **Make a homework schedule.** At the start of each week, she should look at the calendar and write down scheduled events, such as appointments and practices. Then she should mark off time for homework *every day*. This should be at least a two-hour block of time when she will study, do homework or begin a project.
2. **Remove distractions.** Her phone should not be with her during



homework time and the computer should be turned off (unless she needs it for an assignment).

3. **Schedule breaks** *before* study time starts. When your teen knows she will have a break, she will be more focused as she works. Experts recommend students take a 10-minute break after every 60 minutes of work.

**Source:** A. Homayoun, *That Crumpled Paper Was Due Last Week: Helping Disorganized and Distracted Boys Succeed in School and Life*, Perigee Books.

## Self-discipline can help your teen develop responsibility



Research shows that self-discipline has a positive impact on students’ grades, test scores and attendance.

To promote self-discipline:

- **Avoid rescuing your teen.** If he forgets his homework, let him experience the consequences. He needs to learn how to think ahead and solve problems.
- **Avoid doing things for your teen** that he can do for himself. Yes, it might be faster for you to clean

his room. But he needs to learn how to pick up after himself.

- **Encourage your teen** to participate in activities that develop self-discipline. Playing a musical instrument requires your teen to practice regularly. Team sports require your teen to show up for training on time and give his all.

**Source:** D. Laitsch, “Research Brief: Self-Discipline and Student Academic Achievement,” Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, [nswc.com/self-discipline](http://nswc.com/self-discipline).