

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Three New Year's resolutions can lead to academic success

The start of a new calendar year is a good time to review the first half of the school year. Are your teen's grades where he—and you—would like them to be? If not, it may be time to make learning resolutions.

Here are three to suggest:

- 1. Get to class on time every day.** Students who consistently miss a class, or who arrive late, miss out on important information. Teachers don't have time to reteach material every time a student is absent or late.
- 2. Read for pleasure.** Research shows that teens can greatly benefit from time spent reading. Unfortunately, according to several studies, there has been a decline in reading among teens. So encourage your

teen to spend time each day reading something he likes—a sports story, a thriller or a magazine. It doesn't matter what he reads, just that he reads.

- 3. Cut down on screen time.** Studies show that most teens spend nine hours a day on their phones, tablets or computers. Not surprisingly, those with the highest amounts of screen time have the lowest grades. So ask your teen to turn off the TV and other screens for an hour or two. Encourage him to use that time to read, be active or just daydream.

Source: P. Wilson, "Reading Is in Decline: If Not You, Then Who?" Public Library Association, nswc.com/high_decline; M. Willett, "A study says teens are spending nearly all their waking hours staring at screens," Business Insider, nswc.com/high_screens.

Encourage your teen to take class notes



Why do some teens do better in school than others? One reason may be that they take notes.

When students take notes in class, they pay closer attention to what they hear. That makes it easier for them to learn the material and remember it at test time.

However, teens don't always know what to write down. They know they can't write everything the teacher says, so they tend to go to the other extreme and write nothing.

Suggest that your teen take notes whenever the teacher:

- **Repeats something.**
- **Speaks more loudly or distinctly.**
- **Gives a list of items.**
- **Defines a word.**
- **Writes something on the board.**
- **Pauses** to give students time to finish taking notes.
- **Summarizes** the main idea at the end of class.

Encourage your teen to review her class notes as soon as she can after class. She'll be more likely to notice if she missed anything when the material is fresh in her mind.

Show your teen how to create a study schedule for tests



Whether your teen is facing a chapter test in science class or a college-admission test, he shouldn't walk in unprepared. A study schedule will help him get ready so he can do his best.

Make sure your teen:

- **Sets priorities.** A good score on a college-admission test might mean the difference between getting in or not. A poor score in a tough class could mean he has to go to summer school. Tests are important, so he needs to prepare.
- **Blocks out time to study.** Your teen can't study during classes, during practice or at work, for example. He still has to do his homework for other classes. Have him look at the calendar and block out other times for study.

- **Reviews past tests.** Teachers often make copies of old tests available. Sample college admission tests are also easy to find. Seeing what is expected can help your teen set a realistic study schedule.
- **Determines what he needs to learn.** It will take longer to study for a unit test if your teen hasn't done the reading or related homework.
- **Leaves time to review.** The night before the test is not the time to learn new material. It's the best time for a final review of the material he's been studying.

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success."

—Alexander Graham Bell

Writing a persuasive letter can strengthen writing skills



You have probably noticed that your teen is forming her own opinions about a lot of things. Teens are known for their strong views on what is "fair"—something you may have experienced when discussing her weekend curfew.

Beyond developing a tendency to take a stand on almost anything, as your teen matures, she is also better able to understand the different sides to an argument.

Use your teen's debating skills to promote her writing skills! Find out what she's passionate about. Is it politics? Maybe your town's new curfew for teen drivers drives her up the wall. Is your teen more focused

on music? Perhaps she thinks her favorite band's latest CD wasn't up to their usual standard.

After you have discovered what issue your teen is most passionate about, encourage her to do something about it. Have her write a letter expressing her opinion.

Suggest that she do some research on the topic so she can write a well-reasoned explanation of her position. Help her find the name of the appropriate person to address her letter to.

Your teen may feel so energized by her attempts to change the world that she won't even notice she's improving her writing skills—and learning to write a persuasive letter.

Do you promote responsible social media use?



Social networking sites—such as Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram—are increasingly popular among teens. Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen use these sites safely:

1. **Have you talked** with your teen about the dangers of sharing personal information online?
2. **Does your teen know** that if he chooses to be on a social networking site, he must allow you to be part of his network?
3. **Have you talked** about why your teen should not post inappropriate photographs or comments about drugs and alcohol online?
4. **Do you limit** when, where and for how long your teen can use social media?
5. **Does your teen know** you will monitor the computer and his cell phone to see what he's doing?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are helping your teen use social media safely. For each *no* answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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Talk to your high schooler about the dangers of hazing



The high school years offer students lots of opportunities to get involved at school and in the community. Many

teens try out for athletic teams, join organizations and participate in clubs.

But sometimes, before students are accepted into a group, they are asked to prove themselves. Often, this may involve unsanctioned activities that are dangerous or even illegal. It's known as hazing and it's something parents need to be aware of.

You may think that hazing only happens on college campuses. But according to research, 1.5 million high school students are subjected to hazing each year. Examples of hazing rituals include requiring students to:

- **Embarrass themselves** by wearing silly clothes or being called names.
- **Perform services** like carrying books or running errands for members already in the group.

- **Consume food or beverages**, from alcohol to very spicy food.
- **Participate in activities** where individuals are hit, hurt or touched inappropriately.

What can parents do to prevent hazing?

- **Talk to your teen** about how she should expect to be treated. No one should have to be embarrassed or hurt in order to join a group.
- **Get the facts.** Hazing is against school policy and, in most states, it is against the law. Teens who take part can get into serious trouble.
- **Keep your ears open.** Is there a planned off-campus trip or event? Stay in touch with the chaperones.
- **Ask questions.** If you are concerned about an event or activity, contact the school. And if you are aware of an incident of hazing, report it to the school immediately.

Source: Hazing Prevention Starts Now: Engaging Staff, Students and Parents in Promoting a Positive School Culture, The Parent Institute.

Q: My daughter is a junior. She and her friends now have driver's licenses. Mostly, that means we don't see her. *Ever.* Even on school nights, she heads out to "study" with friends. I'm a little worried and I miss having family time with her.

Questions & Answers

A: During adolescence, teens often place more emphasis on spending time with friends than they did as elementary school students—but that doesn't mean family time is any less important to them. Teens need parents to provide guidance about values and advice on a variety of issues, including dating, sex, drugs and alcohol.

So if your daughter is really spending every night out of your house, it's time to set some limits:

- **Find out the specifics.** Where is she going? Who else is there? Is there adult supervision?
- **Limit the number of nights** she can be out of the house each week. The point is not that you want to keep her away from her friends, but that you want to make sure she spends time with the family as well.
- **Set an earlier curfew** on school nights.
- **Host study groups.** If she is working on a project with other students, offer to let them meet at your home.
- **Find ways to stay connected.** It's normal to miss your daughter now that she is spending so much time out of the house. Schedule time to do something you both like. Watch a favorite movie while drinking hot chocolate. Do each other's nails. Set aside time to stay connected.

Prepare your teen for adulthood by giving more responsibility



As a high school student, your teen is in training—and not just for the latest quiz. He's in training for adulthood. Assuming more

responsibility for himself is the way to get there.

Help your teen down the road to adulthood by encouraging him to:

- **Use a calendar** to manage his time. Seeing his test and project dates alongside those of his other activities will help him plan how to use remaining time.
- **Schedule his own appointments.** This will give him more responsibility and control over his schedule.
- **Set a budget** and stick to it. He may have some spending money from an allowance or a part-time job. A budget will help him pay attention to his spending—and see that adding to his savings can be more rewarding than buying another video game.
- **Plan a family outing**—even just a local day trip. Have him research places to visit and come up with a budget.
- **Read the newspaper.** Learning about the issues world leaders deal with will help him see that his responsibilities (like washing the car) aren't the inconvenience he previously thought they were.

It Matters: Motivation

Research reveals importance of a success mindset



The band director handed out a difficult new piece. But your teen wasn't worried. "I'll just practice until I get it."

Then later, his math teacher introduced a new math skill. Your teen rolled his eyes. "I can't learn this," he said. "I'm no good in math."

The truth is that the same strategy your teen learns to master his music is the one that will help him learn the difficult math problems. But many students do not see the connection between practice and results in the classroom.

Researchers at Stanford conducted a study on motivation. They divided students into two groups. They praised one group for their *ability* ("You must be smart to get that right"). They praised the other group for their *effort* ("You really worked hard to figure that out").

Over time, students in the group praised for their ability backed off a challenge. But the teens praised for their work effort said, "Bring it on."

How do you see school success? Do you believe your teen can learn anything if he works at it? That is what researchers now call the "success mindset." It's critical to helping students stay motivated to face—and overcome—challenges.

Thomas Edison once said, "Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Turns out that he was exactly right!

Source: B. Goodwin, *Changing the Odds for Student Success: What Matters Most*, Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.

Ensure your praise is effective with these three strategies

Praise can be a powerful motivator. That's especially true for teens with low self-esteem, or for those who struggle in school.

But as with so many other good things, praise can be overdone. Here are three ways to make your praise more effective:

1. **Tie it to specific actions.** "You rewrote that essay taking into account the comments your teacher offered. It reads so much better now—and I am really proud of the fine work you did."
2. **Do it in private.** A quiet word while the two of you are in the car will mean more to your teen than a public, "Isn't my kid great?" Don't worry—your teen will find a way to let others know what you've said!
3. **Focus your teen's attention on her own good feelings.** The most important part of praise is helping your teen recognize how it feels to



do a good job. So make statements that help her do that: "How did it feel to turn in a paper you knew had improved so much?"

Source: R. Lavoie, *The Motivation Breakthrough: 6 Secrets to Turning On the Tuned-Out Child*, Touchstone Books.

Motivate your teen to succeed in the classroom and in life



It may be a new calendar year, but, for many teens, the school year is getting old. To motivate your teen to do his best for the remainder of the school year, encourage him to:

- **Learn the difference** between doing homework and studying. Doing homework means completing assigned work. Studying means making an effort to learn the material for himself. Make sure your teen allows time to study every day.

- **Accept an academic challenge.** Some teens just coast by, taking the easiest courses and doing the least work possible. But to prepare for college and a good job, they need to step up. Is your teen taking challenging classes? Is he doing his best? If not, how can he increase the challenge level?
- **Manage his time.** Does your teen always put things off until the last minute? Show him how to break down those big projects into smaller, more manageable parts.