

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

Self-discipline is a lesson most teens are still learning

Your high schooler has grown up a lot since her elementary school days. But research suggests she still has more maturing to do. The part of her brain that controls impulses and helps her make good decisions isn't fully developed yet. Your efforts to boost your teen's self-discipline will help her do her best at home and in school. Keep these strategies in mind:



- **Don't take bad behavior personally.** When your teen acts first and thinks later, blurts out the wrong thing or is moody, it's not necessarily because she wants to hurt you. Expect that you will have discipline challenges with your teen.
- **Make limits and consequences clear.** Consider granting your teen more freedom as she shows more responsibility.
- **Be aware of where your teen is,** what she's doing with whom and when she will be home.
- **Concentrate on what's important.** This includes things such as schoolwork and respect for others. Don't nag your teen about small, one-time issues, such as an outfit you don't like.

Remember that while age and brain growth may provide an explanation for some of your teen's actions, they are not an excuse for rudeness or defiance.

Source: D. Walsh, Ph.D., *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, Atria Books.



Resolve to set academic goals

January is "resolution month." As your teen thinks about taking steps to improve his future, help him use this time to move closer to his academic goals. Share these tips with your teen for turning dreams into realities:

- **Remember Janus.** The Roman god Janus, for whom January is named, looked both forward and backward. Have your teen ask himself what goals he met last year. What lessons did he learn that will be useful going forward?
- **See the goal.** What does success look like to your teen? The more vivid a picture he can envision, the more likely he is to achieve it.
- **Write the goal.** Once your teen has a goal in mind, have him write it down on paper. This is the first step in creating a plan to achieve it.
- **Break it down.** Big goals can't be achieved in a day. Your teen may not earn a college scholarship this week, but he can work on building the good habits that will get him on the right path.

Prevent perfectionism

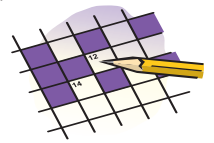
It's good to have high expectations for your student. But when expectations are too high, some kids get anxious. They begin to see small mistakes as failures and become afraid to try. To avert this perfectionism:

- **Praise effort** more than results.
- **Treat mistakes** as learning experiences.
- **Love your teen** for who she is.

Offer many ways to read

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, high school students' reading scores have declined over the past 20 years. If your teen doesn't often read on his own, encourage him to:

- **Try a crossword challenge.** Race your teen to see who can complete a puzzle first.
- **Volunteer to read.** Ask him to read to a younger sibling, or to see if he can read at a day-care center, hospital or library.
- **Take it outside.** He can read in the backyard, on the steps or at a park.



Source: "Fast Facts: Reading," U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, niscw.com/readingstats.

Attendance still matters!

It may be difficult for your teen to get out of bed on a cold winter morning to go to school, but it is critical that she do it. Student success goes hand in hand with good attendance.



Just as your teen shouldn't miss school for a part-time job or a vacation, she should not stay home to catch up on sleep, finish homework or study for a test, either.

Learning builds day by day, and it's often hard to catch up on missed lessons. So get your teen an alarm clock and help her maintain a good attendance habit.



Should I let my teen choose his own classes?

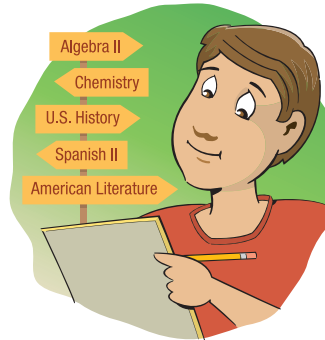
Q: My ninth grader is thinking about the classes he wants to take next year. He doesn't want me to be involved in choosing them. He says it's his life and his choice. What should I do?

A: Parents and teens fight many battles over independence. Sometimes, teens need to win. But planning an academic schedule is not one of those times. The choices your teen makes now will affect everything from where he will go to college (or if he will go to college) to the careers he might pursue.

While your son may be tempted to take the classes his friends are taking, or only the classes required for high school graduation, make sure you and he are also aware of basic college admission requirements. For example, most colleges require high school graduates to have taken four years of English, four years of math, at least three years of science, three years of social studies, two years of a foreign language and one year of the Arts.

This may not be what your teen wants to hear. He may not be thinking about life after graduation. But most jobs today require at least some training after high school, and programs may require certain high school classes. Taking the right classes now will give your teen choices after graduation.

Call the school and schedule a meeting for you and your son with his guidance counselor. Together, lay out a plan for the next three years. Your son will be glad when his transcript gives him good options for his future.



There's no such thing as 'no homework'

In high school, there is always something a student can do to do better in school. If your teen has no assignments due the next day, suggest that he use his study time to:

- **Get started** on a long-term project.
- **Reread a chapter** or review class notes.
- **Write something:** a poem, a letter.
- **Practice math problems.**
- **Explain one** of his recent science experiments to you.

Source: R. Dellabough, *101 Ways To Get Straight A's*, Troll Associates.

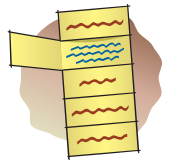
Stop stress with self-talk

Your teen may be about to step up to the free throw line. Or take a test that counts for a big part of her grade. High school is full of stressful situations for teens.

You can help her cope with stress by teaching her to speak to herself positively. Have her say things like, "I've practiced this hundreds of times. I know how to do it."

Study organizers get teens ready to learn

What's the difference between *mitosis* and *meiosis*? How does a *simile* differ from a *metaphor*? High school students have lots of terms to learn, and study organizers can help. Here's how your teen can make one:



1. **Fold a sheet of paper** in half vertically.
2. **Divide the front half** into five or six tabs by cutting from the edge to the fold.
3. **Write a term on each tab**, then fold the tab back and write the definition on the paper behind it.
4. **Study by writing** definitions on a new piece of paper, then flipping the organizer's tabs to check. Or reverse: look at the organizer's definitions and write the terms.

Parent Quiz

Are you promoting online safety?

Today's teens seem to spend an ever increasing amount of time online. Are you doing all you can to guide your teen's online activity and ensure her privacy and safety? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about the types of information she can share online?
- ___ **2. Have your reminded** your teen that *everything* she posts should be something she could show an employer or college admissions counselor?
- ___ **3. Have you talked** with your teen about what makes a true friend? A social media "friend request" doesn't mean the requester is really her friend.
- ___ **4. Do you keep** your teen's phone out of her bedroom at night?

- ___ **5. Do you check** your teen's online activity regularly?

How well are you doing?

More *yes* answers mean you are helping your teen protect herself from online dangers. For each *no*, try that idea.

"In the final analysis it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings."
—Ann Landers

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