

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

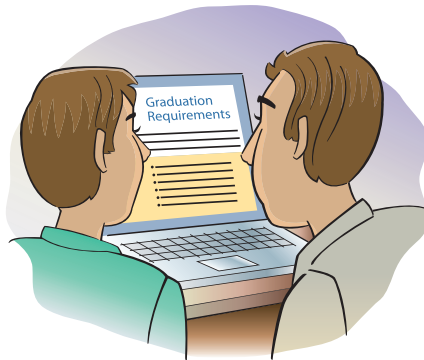


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Coach your teen all the way to improved academic achievement

Your teen is in high school, and the most effective ways for you to be involved with his education are different than they were when he was younger. But your involvement is still important! Now you're more like a coach—on the sidelines, but still very engaged with the game. Here are five great ways to stay involved:



- 1. Talk with your teen** often about his classes and what he's learning.
- 2. Practice planning** with your teen. Big, long-term projects can still be a challenge for a teenage brain. Help him develop realistic plans for getting everything done.
- 3. Review graduation requirements.** You don't want to wait until the last few weeks of your teen's senior year to discover he won't be graduating with his class.
- 4. Help your teen focus on the future.** Where does he see himself after high school? Work with the school to make sure he takes the classes he will need to be ready for college or a career.
- 5. Monitor your teen's attendance** and school performance. If there is a way to check his grades online, do so regularly. When progress reports or report cards are issued, discuss them with your teen.

Source: "Parent Tips for Staying Involved in Your Child's High School Years," Arizona State Parent Information Resource Center.



Teach your teen how to choose wisely

Your teen will have to make all kinds of decisions in high school, from selecting classes to deciding how to handle negative peer pressure.

Talk to your teen about her options. To encourage her to make sound decisions:

- **Ask her to describe** the issue she is facing. Ask open-ended questions to find out what her concerns are.
- **Discuss all possible choices.** Help her identify alternatives. List the pros and cons of each option. Talk through the ways different outcomes could affect her goals.

- **Allow your teen** to make a decision and carry it out. Later, ask her what she learned.

Keep in mind that teenagers often rebel as a way to assert independence. While it may seem like your teen is challenging your values, with your support and guidance she will develop the character traits that will enable her to make good decisions.

Source: "Helping Your Teen Make Responsible Choices," Palo Alto Medical Foundation, niswc.com/decide.

Log out of cyberbullying

Technology can be a great academic resource for teens. Unfortunately, it can also be used as a tool for bullying. If your teen is a victim of cyberbullying:

- **Tell her never to respond** to bullying posts or emails.
- **Keep a record** of all messages from a cyberbully.
- **Alert the school** to the problem.

The future starts now

Your teen is the right age to begin thinking about possible careers and the academic goals he'll need to meet to get there.



To get him started:

- **Talk about your job experiences.** Try to arrange job-shadowing at work.
- **Research educational options** with your teen. What training or degree does he need to pursue his career choice?
- **Teach basic life skills.** List living expenses such as rent, food and clothes. Compare total expenses to the average salaries of jobs that interest your teen.

Take note of the five W's

The "5 W's and 1 H" method of notetaking helps students identify and remember the important people, events and dates they read about.



- **Have your teen create** six headings on a piece of paper: *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?*
- **Have her jot down** information under the appropriate heading as she reads. She should ask herself questions such as: *Who* was there? *What* caused the event? *When* did it happen? *Where* did it take place? *Why* were the time and place significant? *How* did it turn out?



My teen may be cutting herself. What do I do?

Q: A friend told me her daughter is seeing a counselor because she has been cutting herself. Our daughters are friends, and now I'm worried that my daughter may be doing it too. She spends a lot of time alone—and she always seems to wear long sleeves. What should I do?



A: You are right to be concerned. Cutting is something parents need to know about. This self-harming behavior is not just a "phase." Most teens who cut themselves are trying to cope with serious emotional pain or anger. If your daughter is cutting, the behavior is not likely to go away without some help.

If you find out your teen is cutting:

- **Don't get angry—it won't help.** Keep the lines of communication between you open.
- **Talk with your teen's doctor.** Find out about counseling.
- **Be as supportive as you can.** Your goal is to help your teen find positive ways to deal with her emotions.
- **Tell the school.** Your daughter and her friend may not be the only ones who are cutting. School counselors should be aware of the problem so they can also take action.



Are you setting digital boundaries?

Teens are spending more and more time online. That takes time away from everything else—from exercise to homework to family time. Are you helping your teen balance his online time? Answer *yes* or *no* to find out:

1. **Do you insist** that family mealtimes be "screen-free"?
2. **Do you keep the TV** out of your teen's bedroom?
3. **Do you have** the computer your teen uses in a central place, so you can monitor sites he's visiting and people he's communicating with?
4. **Do you help** your teen plan which homework assignments need the Internet, and stay offline for the rest?
5. **Do you maintain** a "digital curfew" and keep cell phones

out of your teen's bedroom at night?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are helping your teen manage his time online well. For each no, try that idea.

"The best inheritance a parent can give his children is a few minutes of his time each day."

—Henry Ford

Peer pressure doesn't have to be negative!

Help your teen experience positive peer pressure by promoting activities where she'll meet teens who share her goals and who are likely to be strong peer models. Try to:

- **Look for extracurricular activities** that match her interests. Suggest she join a local service club or a youth group at a house of worship or community center.
- **Let her entertain friends** at your home when you are there. Offer snacks.
- **Talk to the parents** of her friends about their rules and values.

Source: K. McCoy, Ph.D., "Helping Your Teen to Find a Positive Peer Group," niswc.com/positive.

When more isn't better

Combine tough classes, sports, volunteer work and a frenzy of extracurricular activities and you can end up with an over-scheduled, irritable, exhausted teen. To provide a reality check:



- **Help him prioritize.** Allow time for the things he enjoys most.
- **Watch out for wasted time.** Social media and texting use up valuable time.

A guide to the college path

As high school students move through the college application process, the school counselor becomes a key ally. The counselor can:

- **Suggest schools** your teen may want to consider that would be a good fit.
- **Write a recommendation.** Your teen can make this easier by providing a résumé of accomplishments and out-of-school activities.
- **Help your teen stay on top** of application paperwork.

Source: "Role of the School Counselor," American School Counselor Association, niswc.com/pathfinder.

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