

High School Parents[®]

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still make the difference!



Conquer math challenges with a five-step plan for success

High school math can be frustrating for both students and parents. Your child may feel like she “just doesn’t get it.” And you may not be able to help her like you could in elementary school. Still, you can offer your teen a strategy to try:

- 1. Start with a good attitude.** Ask your teen to say, out loud, “I am capable of doing this math.” Research has shown that positive thinking has a big impact on motivation.
- 2. Do a little at a time.** It might be easier for your teen to complete five problems in one sitting instead of all 30 at once. Encourage her to take breaks in between.
- 3. Read each problem** at least twice. If your teen gets confused, she should check the textbook (or another source) for an explanation

of how to do that type of problem. Looking at sample problems can be a big help.

- 4. Start solving the problems.** Encourage your teen to take her time.
- 5. Go back if you hit a snag.** Your teen should go back and carefully check her work. Sometimes, the issue is a mistake in adding or subtracting, or in using the wrong equation. If that doesn’t get her back on track, she could try the textbook again, use the Internet (try www.askdrmath.com) or call a friend with strong math skills. With this strategy, your teen should be well on her way to conquering math challenges. But if your teen still struggles, suggest that she talk to her teacher for specific help.

Source: E. Jensen, *Student Success Secrets*, Barron’s Educational Series, Inc.

Share statistics to get teens to stay in school



High school graduates make more money than high school dropouts—on average, about \$10,000 more each year. But if money alone isn’t enough to motivate your teen to stay in school, share these surprising statistics.

- High school graduates:
- **Live longer** than high school dropouts.
 - **Are less likely** to commit crimes.
 - **Are more likely to give back** to their communities by voting and volunteering.
 - **Are more likely to raise** better-educated children.

Getting your teen to stay in school can be as simple as telling him how important his education is. It’s often hard for teens to see “the big picture”—the effect that finishing high school has on the rest of their lives. So talk about how proud you are of his efforts, and how much you appreciate your own education—or why you wish you had learned more.

Source: “The High Cost of High School Dropouts,” Alliance for Excellent Education, www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/HighCost.pdf.

Bolster your teen's vocabulary with flashcards, games & texting



In order for your teen to be successful on college entrance exams like the SAT and ACT, he needs to have a strong vocabulary. Your teen may already be learning a list of specific vocabulary words in school. Here's how to reinforce that learning at home:

- **Use flashcards.** Being drilled on words and their definitions might not be your teen's favorite activity, but it is effective—and a simple way for you to get involved. Just read the definition and have your teen provide the word. Or read the word and ask your teen to name two synonyms (words with similar meanings).
- **Declare a "Word of the Day."** Look at your teen's vocabulary list

and choose a new word each day. Challenge family members to use this word in regular conversation. Whoever uses it correctly the most times might win a small reward—like being able to choose tomorrow's dinner menu.

- **Text your child a vocabulary word** and its definition. Sure, he might groan, but you know your teen will read the text. Teens just can't seem to stay away from their phones, so texting is a great way to sneak in some learning.

"He who trims himself to suit everyone will soon whittle himself away."

—Raymond Hull

Share facts about the dangers of marijuana use with your teen



Since 1975, the *Monitoring the Future* survey has kept track of students' attitudes towards alcohol and drugs. One of the most frightening trends noticed this year is the decline of "perceived risk of regular marijuana use." That means more kids are beginning to believe that there's no risk to using marijuana regularly—and that's simply not true!

Marijuana can be:

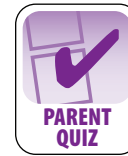
- **Addictive.** In fact, over half of teens in rehab are there for help fighting marijuana addiction.
- **Dangerous.** Driving while high (or riding with someone who is) could be deadly. People under the influence of marijuana have slower reflexes and can't judge distances

accurately—which is a big problem when it comes to following traffic signals.

- **Linked to school failure.** People who use marijuana regularly are more likely to get lower grades and drop out of school. Even occasional users experience negative effects on attention, memory and learning that can last for weeks. Now that you know the facts, it's time to talk to your teen. Make sure that he understands that using marijuana is a risky choice. Ask him if he thinks a short-lived high is really worth the effects marijuana can have on his future.

Sources: "NIDA InfoFacts: High School and Youth Trends," National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, www.drugabuse.gov/infofacts/HSYouthtrends.html; *Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know*, National Institute on Drug Abuse, www.drugabuse.gov/MarijBroch/parents.

Do you know how to help when your teen struggles?



For many teens, there is one class that is a real challenge. Perhaps the teacher isn't their favorite. Perhaps the subject is harder to learn. Whatever the issue, their grades begin to suffer.

If your teen is struggling in a class, do you know how to handle the problem? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Have you talked** with your teen about the class and asked her why she thinks she is struggling?
- ___ **2. Have you encouraged** your teen to spend time working on this class every day? Minds are like muscles that get stronger with practice.
- ___ **3. Have you encouraged** your teen to talk with the teacher to develop a plan for improvement?
- ___ **4. Have you helped** your teen explore resources, such as tutoring?
- ___ **5. Do you celebrate** every sign of your teen's progress?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are taking positive steps to help your struggling student. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Conversations, websites & books promote critical thinking skills



Good critical thinking skills will help your teen one day meet the advanced demands of the workplace. Help your teen strengthen his critical thinking skills through:

- **Conversations.** With your teen, imagine you're explaining customs to someone from another culture—or even another planet. Think about driving, for instance. Why do people drive on the right side of the road in the United States? Or consider team sports. Why is there so much focus on winning and losing? Why do fans care which team wins, when they're not actually part of the team? Questions beginning with *why*, *how* and *what* will get your teen's creativity flowing.

- **Evaluating websites.** Your teen uses critical thinking skills when he is choosing websites as sources for a research paper. He has to decide which website is the most useful, the most credible and the most up to date—and with the wealth of information a search engine provides, that can be difficult to determine.
- **Reading books.** Help your teen find books of logic puzzles and brainteasers. Encourage your teen to read a mystery book and try to solve the mystery before the main character does.

Sources: "Thinking Skills for the Workforce Project," Berger Institute for Work, Family, and Children at Claremont McKenna College, www.cmc.edu/berger/research/thinking.php; G. Fleming, "Critical Thinking Exercises," About.com: Homework/Study Tips, <http://homeworktips.about.com/od/paperassignments/a/Critical-Thinking-Exercises.htm>.

Study shows that parents can influence teens' choice of friends



You already know that peers have a big influence on your teen's behavior. But did you know that you as a

parent can help shape your teen's choice of friends?

A study from Ohio State says that parents have a greater influence than they may think. Your relationship with your teen is key. When teens have a warm relationship with their parents, they are likely to choose friends who earn high grades, plan to go to college, and are involved with school activities.

But if teens are in constant conflict with parents, they choose friends who are less positive. Their grades are worse. They are less involved with school. And they are

more likely to encourage negative behavior.

- To build a positive relationship:
- **Do things together.** Parents and teens who spend time on activities build a stronger bond. They learn to enjoy each other's company. They develop interests. All these are things that a teen will also look for in a friend.
 - **Keep the lines of communication open.** Teens need to know they can talk to parents about anything.
 - **Show your affection.** Teens need to hear that you love them and are proud of them.

Source: C. Knoester and others, "Parenting Practices and Adolescents' Friendship Networks," Paper Presented at the American Sociological Association Convention, http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/2/2/9/4/pages22942/p22942-1.php.

Q: My ninth-grade daughter has made some friends I don't know. She now spends nearly every weekend night at a sleepover at one friend's house. I don't know this girl, and I don't know her parents. Should I be concerned?

Questions & Answers

A: Sleepovers are one big way girls spend time with their friends. But when the sleepovers become too frequent, there may be something else going on.

Often, teens choose to sleep over at a home where there is little parental supervision. That means the girls may have found a way to sneak out of the house. Or they may be going to parties where there is drinking, aware that no one will check on them when they come home.

Set some limits on the friendship with this girl. Don't make her off-limits—that will encourage your daughter to want to spend even *more* time with her.

Instead, welcome her into your home. Invite her to eat dinner with you. Plan an activity for the two families so you can get to know her parents. And put the brakes on sleepovers for now, until you get a better sense of what's going on.

And ask your daughter lots of questions. Who is she spending time with? Where is she going? What is she doing?

One study found that when parents questioned girls about their friends and activities, the girls were more likely to make better choices. They were less likely to drink or engage in other negative behaviors.

—Kris Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Homework & Study Skills

Help your teen learn how to manage time



Teens have different strengths, weaknesses and skills. But there's one way in which they are all alike: They all

have only 24 hours in a day to accomplish everything that needs to get done.

Finding a way to balance all the things they *want* to do with the things they *have* to do can be a real challenge. But studies show it's worth it.

Researchers have found that students who take part in organized activities, whether they are sports, clubs or Scouts, do better in school. They earn better grades and get into less disciplinary trouble.

Still, teens need to learn how to manage their time. Here are some ways they can make the most of those 24 hours each day:

- **Make a to-do list every day.** Just the act of writing down what needs to get done will focus your teen on what's important.
- **Break big jobs** into five-minute tasks. With flash cards in her backpack, she can review vocabulary words before the bus arrives.
- **Get enough sleep.** Many teens skimp on sleep so they can do other things. But this is a time when they need their rest. One simple way to encourage your teen to get more sleep is not to allow a TV, a computer or a cell phone in her bedroom at night.

Source: J.L. Mahoney and others, "Organized Activity Participation, Positive Youth Development and the Over-Scheduling Hypothesis," Society for Research in Child Development, www.srcd.org/press/mahoney.pdf.

Share strategies to help your high schooler stay organized

He has a science test tomorrow. But he left the science book—well, he left it somewhere. It might be in his locker. It could be in his friend's car. It is definitely not where he can use it to study.

Helping teens get, and stay, organized can actually help them do better in school. Encourage your teen to:

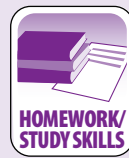
- **Clean out his backpack** every Friday.
- **Organize his locker** once a week. If he can't see his Algebra book, he is not likely to bring it home.
- **Keep a large calendar** where he studies. Write due dates on the calendar so he knows what assignment is due when.
- **Get organized at night.** Very few teens are morning people.



So have him take time at night to put all the homework in the backpack and to lay out what he needs for school tomorrow.

Source: "Time Management for Teens," Glencoe Health, www.glencoe.com/sec/health/updateshome/bul_arch/fall03_01.shtml.

Improve note-taking skills for greater success in high school



Taking good notes involves much more than the ability to write quickly. Studies show that good note-takers are also listening or reading carefully. They are making decisions about what's important.

Here are three ways your teen can improve her note-taking:

1. **Take lots of notes.** The more notes she takes, the better. Teens sometimes think they should boil down their notes to a few words. But studies show that including more information in the notes is helpful.

2. **Think of her notes** as a work in progress. She might take notes on a history chapter. Then, in class, she would add information from the teacher. Finally, she could go back to review. The more time your teen spends with her notes, the more she will learn.
3. **Use notes as study guides** when it's time for a test. Few students seem to be aware of what a boost they can get from reviewing good notes.

Source: R.J. Marzano, *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, ASCD Books.