

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Chambersburg Area School District

***still make the difference!***



## Sneak some reading into your teenager's school break

**Y**our teen may be on a break from school, but it's important to make sure she stays in the habit of reading. Find ways to sneak some reading into your teen's vacation. Encourage her to read:

- **Cookbooks.** Whether you're cooking a big holiday meal or just baking cookies, ask your teen to help. Not only will she have to read the directions to successfully create the recipe, but she'll also have to practice her math skills when measuring out the ingredients. She's reading and learning, and you can cross one more thing off your to-do list!
- **Novels.** Take your teen to your local library. If she doesn't have that much homework to complete over the break, she may have time to read a book for pleasure. Ask the librarian to suggest a few interesting books for teens. If you celebrate a holiday this month, consider giving your teen a few books as gifts.
- **Aloud.** Encourage your teen to read to others. Ask her to read to her younger brother while you run a few errands. Or perhaps she could spend some time reading to an older relative who can't see that well. She can even read you a few newspaper articles she finds interesting while you are preparing a meal.
- **While traveling.** If you're taking a trip over the break, make sure your teen packs some books to bring with her to read. They'll help beat the boredom of traveling—and keep her reading skills sharp at the same time.

## Take the TV out of your teen's bedroom now!



You're upgrading the TV in the living room. Should you give the old set to your teen for his

room?

Not according to the latest research from the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. It turns out that teens with TVs in their rooms are less likely to engage in other healthy activities. They exercise less. They eat fewer fruits and vegetables (but drink more soft drinks and eat more fast foods). They spend more time in their rooms—and less time with their families. That's because they're twice as likely to watch five hours of TV or more a day.

These teens also read less. They study less. Not surprisingly, they also earn lower grades than teens without televisions in their rooms.

If your teen doesn't have a TV in his room, don't give him one. If he does have a set in his room, consider moving it to a place the whole family can share.

**Source:** "Teens Who Have TV In Their Bedrooms Are Less Likely To Engage In Healthy Habits, Study Shows," ScienceDaily, [www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080407074546.htm](http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/04/080407074546.htm).

# Build memories by celebrating the milestones in your teen's life



Ancient cultures had traditions for marking milestones in a young person's life. In our culture, high school graduation is about the only such celebration. Finding ways to mark other milestones in your teen's life can be a great way to build wonderful memories.

A birthday celebration, for example, can be more than just a cake and a few gifts. Plan a meal that includes your teen's favorite foods. Decorate the table with things that reflect your teen's interests. Have each family member offer a special wish.

Look for other times you can celebrate. She earned her first A on a chemistry test. She passed her driver's test. She made the cast of the

spring musical. All these can be causes for a small celebration. Enjoy a cup of tea or hot chocolate. Eat dinner by candlelight.

Letters make a wonderful way for you to mark a milestone. Write her a letter telling her how proud you are. Share your hopes for her future. She may never remember the gift she received for her birthday—but she'll probably keep your letter forever.

Source: Mimi Doe, *Nurturing Your Teenager's Soul*, ISBN: 0-39953-028-2 (Penguin Group, 1-800-788-6262, www.penguinugroup.com).

**"The road to success is dotted with many tempting parking places."**

—Author Unknown

# Encourage your teen to manage feelings & emotions responsibly



Your teen claims he's "almost a grown-up"—and you're inclined to agree with him. He does his chores without being reminded, he can be trusted to come home by curfew and he manages his money well. But there's one more part of being a "grown-up"—managing his emotions responsibly.

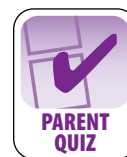
Your teen needs to know how to deal with his emotions like a "grown-up." Be sure your teen knows how to responsibly handle:

- **His worries.** Ask him to make a list, dividing his worries into "Things I can change" and "Things I have no control over." Help him focus on solving the problems he can affect and forgetting about the things he can't.

- **His feelings.** Encourage him to talk about his feelings instead of acting out or bottling them up inside. Telling a friend "I'm hurt by the way you treated me" and giving her a chance to explain herself is more "grown up" than spreading untrue rumors about her as revenge.
- **His emotions.** Just because he is angry with his soccer coach doesn't give him the right to kick his sister's dolls out of his way. Teach him to calm himself down by taking deep breaths or counting to 10. Afterwards, he will be able to clearly think about how to handle the situation.

Source: Sean Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens*, ISBN: 0-6848-5609-3 (Fireside, a division of Simon & Schuster, 1-800-223-2336, www.simonays.com).

# Are you helping your teen become self-reliant?



One of the toughest jobs facing parents of teens is helping their children learn how to stand on their own. Here's a quiz to see how you're doing.

1. **I try to involve** my teen in setting the rules. He is learning how to negotiate.
2. **I've taught him** basic life skills, such as doing laundry and balancing a checkbook. I encourage him to take responsibility for himself.
3. **I demonstrate**—and teach—time management. I have helped my teen learn how to organize big projects so he meets deadlines.
4. **I have encouraged my teen** to take a speech course. Adults who are comfortable speaking in front of a group have more confidence.
5. **I've tried to teach him** good decision-making skills. I set limits but encourage him to make decisions inside those boundaries.

How well are you doing?

Each yes means you are moving your teen toward becoming a self-reliant adult. For no answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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# What should you do when your teen has a problem at school?



A teacher has asked to meet with you and your teen about a problem. This is a tricky situation for parents. You want to do more than just

observe. But you know that it's not your job to solve the problem, either. Here are some tips to allow you to help, but not too much:

- **Break the ice.** Thank the teacher for his time. Ask him to start your meeting by giving a summary of the problem.
- **Ask your teen to speak next.** Once the teacher has given his view of things, have your teen do the

same. It's important to know how each sees the situation.

- **Ask a question or two** if you think either one should elaborate.
- **Recap the conversation** so far. "Jeff, you think your history grade is unfair. But Mr. White says you haven't shown up for any of the extra credit sessions after school. Do you have other ideas about how you could improve your grade?"
- **Step back.** At this point the problem is theirs to solve.

**Source:** Louise Felton Tracy, *Grounded for Life? Stop Blowing Your Fuse and Start Communicating With Your Teenager*, ISBN: 0-943990-95-5 (Parenting Press, Inc, 1-800-992-6657, [www.parentingpress.com](http://www.parentingpress.com)).

# Make sure your teen is safe while using social networking sites



A recent Harris survey found that teens spend about 10 times more time online than their parents think they do. Often, they

may be on social networking sites, such as MySpace and Facebook.

These sites can be a great way for teens to stay in touch with friends. They can share photos and thoughts.

But there can be a downside to these social networking sites. Teens sometimes believe they can say anything online. They don't think about the consequences of their actions.

Here's how you can help your teen make the best choices while on social networking sites:

- **Limit online "friends."** The page your teen creates can only be viewed by people she classifies as "friends." Often, teens give a "friend" classification to people they don't know at all. One good rule to set for your teen: Choose

only friends you'd know how to contact in real life.

- **Remind your teen** that nothing can ever be completely removed from the Internet. She should think carefully before posting anything that would damage her reputation or her friendships.
- **Talk about values.** Remind your teen that if she wouldn't do something in real life, she should avoid doing it online.
- **Stress safety.** Your teen should never post information that would allow someone to locate her in real life. She should also not arrange to meet anyone she has only met online.
- **Help her keep the balance.** Online friendships are great, but be sure your teen spends time with friends in the real world.

**Source:** Nancy Willard, M.S., J.D., "Social Networking Safety: A Guide for Parents," [www.futureofchildren.org/usr\\_doc/snssafety.pdf](http://www.futureofchildren.org/usr_doc/snssafety.pdf).

**Q:** My daughter, a junior, talks with her friends—constantly. She's on the phone. She's texting. She's emailing. But to me? Hardly a word. If I ask her how school went, she'll answer with, "Okay." If I ask who she's going out with, she says, "Friends." We used to be close. What can I do to get her talking with me again?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** The short answer to your question is, "Wait a few years." Right now your daughter is trying to separate from you. She's trying to figure out who she is. To do that, she needs to put some distance between the two of you.

That's fine. But she is still your daughter, it's still your house and you still have a right to know what's going on. So if she tells you she's going with "friends," you can say, "I need more information. Otherwise, you're not going anywhere with anyone."

In other words, she doesn't have to share all the details of her life. She does, however, have to answer basic questions about her safety. Where is she going? With whom? When will she be back? Otherwise, she can't go.

There are some ways you can encourage more talk. Try doing some side-by-side activities—cooking, watching TV, driving in a car. Somehow, teens are more likely to talk if they don't have to make eye contact at the same time.

In a few years, she'll be standing on her own two feet. That's when she's likely to call and say, "Mom, can we talk?" But for now, give your daughter the space she needs to grow.

—Kristen Amundson,  
The Parent Institute



# It Matters: Study Skills

## Encourage your teenager to focus when studying



Teens are constantly distracted—and that's very obvious when they sit down to study. If your teen seems unable to sit still, he's not alone.

One way to help your teen focus is to teach him to write tasks down. A written list can motivate your teen to get to work faster—and to stay on the task at hand. Help your teen learn to manage his time:

- **Daily**—with a to-do list. Suggest that he write down all the assignments he has to do that day. After he has done this, he's ready to create a schedule. Does he know his attention span is shot after 50 minutes of studying? Then he should plan for short (five- to 10-minute) breaks every hour.
- **Weekly**—with a planner. Encourage him to plan out his time for the upcoming week—his classes, appointments, meetings, practices, family dinners, etc. Then he can fill in his study time. Seeing that he has to stick to this schedule if he wants to go out on Friday night may motivate him to stay focused.
- **Monthly**—with a calendar. A wall calendar can help him plan for long-term assignments. He can break down big assignments like science projects or term papers into shorter steps. Giving each section of the project a due date will make the large task feel less daunting.

Source: "Time Management," Study Guides and Strategies, <http://studygs.net/timman.htm>.

## Show your teen how to create a study group that really works

**S**tudying can be a lonely job. So studying with a group can be a fun way to focus. Some experts also believe it can help everyone in the group do better on tests.

But some study groups get off track. Instead of studying, members talk about last night's TV show or tomorrow's game. Here's how to make a study group work:

- **Keep the group small**—no more than four kids. Be sure your teen selects members who actually pay attention in class.
- **Divide the work.** Each person should have an assignment. His job is to teach that material to the rest of the group.
- **Stick to the agenda.** If the group spends all night on one chapter, they won't cover what they need to learn for the test. Assign someone to be the timekeeper.



- **Have group members drill each other on facts.** Spend part of each session reviewing the facts that have to be memorized.
- **Spend time asking the "why" questions.** The benefit of a group is that students can share their ideas.

Source: Cynthia Johnson, *Caffeine Will Not Help You Pass That Test*, ISBN: 9780-7432-7966-6 (Kaplan Books, 1-800-223-2336, [www.simonsays.com](http://www.simonsays.com)).

## Give your teen three strategies for taking effective notes in class



In order for your teen to get the most out of her study time, she needs to know how to take good notes in class—where the teacher covers the most important information—the material most likely to be on the tests!

Give your teen these tips for taking notes:

1. **Listen for the main ideas.** Anything the teacher repeats more than once or writes on the blackboard is important enough to go in your notes.

2. **Keep it brief.** Use a system of abbreviations and symbols but make sure you remember what they mean. (If your teen is skilled at text messaging, she may want to use those abbreviations when taking notes in class.)
3. **Review your notes**—right after class, if possible. You'll be better able to fill in something you missed, and more likely to remember the information come test time.

Source: "Taking Lecture and Class Notes," Academic Skills Center, [www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/success/notes.html).