

September 2020

# High School YEARS

Working Together for Lifelong Success



## Short Clips

### Update house rules

The start of the school year is a good time to talk with your teenager about your rules and to make any changes. Discuss reasons behind rules (keeping her safe, making sure schoolwork gets done) and consequences for breaking them. Then, post the rules on the refrigerator so she's clear about expectations.

### Nice to meet you!

Getting to know your high schooler's teachers now opens the door to communication throughout the year. Email each teacher to introduce yourself. And let your teen know you're doing this—he'll see that you're working with his teachers to help him succeed.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Coloring books aren't just for little kids. They're available for all ages and on just about every subject, from Shakespeare to science. To find coloring books or printable pages, your teen can type a topic she's studying (say, "cells") and "coloring pages" into a search engine. It's a fun and relaxing way to learn new things.

### Worth quoting

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."  
Albert Einstein

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do pelicans carry fish in their beaks?

**A:** Because they don't have pockets.



## In gear for a new year

Whether your teen is an incoming freshman or a rising senior, you probably have questions about the new school year. These answers can help you get your high schooler off to a good start—during a challenging time.

**Q: How can I support my child when he does schoolwork online?**

**A:** Suggest that he start by organizing files on the device he uses for school. Also make sure he knows how to access online materials for every class. If a class meets via video chat, remind him to avoid off-topic private messages and to follow rules for using his microphone.

**Q: My teen was taking algebra I when the pandemic hit, and he's worried algebra II will be too hard. What can he do?**

**A:** Reassure him that everyone's probably a little rusty, and his teacher will help to bring students up to speed. Encourage him to pay attention when the teacher reviews algebra I material. He might also look at last year's assignments to brush up on formulas or terms he isn't clear on.



**Q: What is the college search and application process like now?**

**A:** The situation is changing rapidly, and each college is different. At [nacacnet.org/news--publications/coronavirus/](http://nacacnet.org/news--publications/coronavirus/), your child will find current information from individual schools about testing requirements, campus tours, and application dates. Regardless of any changes, he should continue working with the school counselor to ensure he takes the right courses to reach his goals. 👍

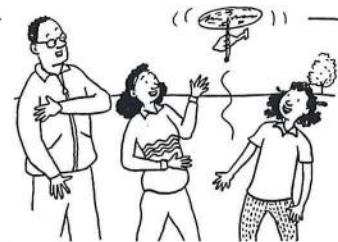
## A family STEM lab

Make STEM an ongoing family affair with these ideas for creating a lab that your high schooler can take the lead on.

**1. Collect items.** Have your high schooler fill a large bin with project supplies like cardboard boxes and tubes, paper clips, rubber bands, string, tape, glue—and anything else for building or creating.

**2. Do projects.** Let your teen post a list of ideas to try. She might design a rubber-band helicopter while you build a model cantilever house.

**3. Hold a STEM fair.** Set aside a night to share your projects. Your child can show how her helicopter flies, and you could explain how a cantilever works. 👍



## Build strong work habits

Why do some teenagers put in the effort to see a project through while others give up or don't give it their all? The difference often lies in their work habits. Motivate your high schooler to strengthen hers with these tips.

**Connect the dots.** Have your teen think about the "Why?" behind hard work. Say she's tackling a tough AP biology paper. Suggest that she consider how the assignment will help her reach her goal of becoming a medical researcher. She'll start to see that choosing to put in the work now will pay off later.



**Own your decisions.** If your high schooler puts off her history project until the last minute, resist the urge to stay up late to help. By allowing her to experience the natural result of slacking off, she'll learn that hard work does matter. And she might make different decisions next time.

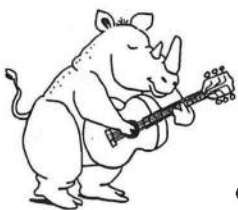
**Enjoy the rewards.** A job well done is valuable in itself. When your child finishes a challenging assignment and is happy with the result, encourage her to remember the moment. The next time she's working hard, she'll know that those feelings of pride and satisfaction are just around the corner. 👍

## Boost your well-being

Most teens know they need to maintain their physical health. But they may not know how to take care of their emotional well-being. Share these strategies.

### Find comforting activities

Encourage your high schooler to devote time each day to something that makes him happy. Maybe that's writing in his journal or playing his guitar. Or perhaps going for a run or meditating lets him work through his thoughts and quiet his mind.



### Use stress-relief techniques

Taking slow, deep breaths (in through the nose, out through the mouth) eases anxiety. Your teen could imagine blowing out negative thoughts on his exhale. Or he might recall a time he felt peaceful—such as when he was on a hike or at the beach—and then picture it when he's stressed. 👍

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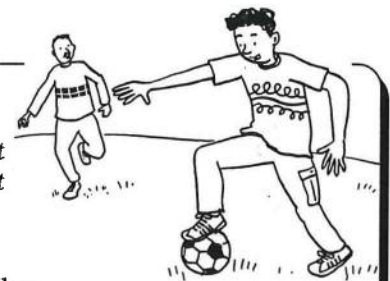
## Q & A

### Teens and screens

**Q** I used to limit my son's screen time. But as he has gotten older, I've gotten lax about enforcing the limit. What do you suggest?

**A** The key thing to consider is whether your teen's screen time is keeping him from doing other important things. After all, there are only so many hours in the day. Is he getting at least an hour of daily physical activity? Eight to 10 hours of sleep? Is he finishing his homework and spending time with family? If not, you'll probably want to help him dial down his screen time.

You could start by creating guidelines like no phones during meals and no TV or video games after a certain time at night. Filling in his schedule can also squeeze out screen time. So walk the dog together after dinner, and encourage screen-free hobbies. And don't underestimate the effectiveness of simple reminders: "Hey, you've been sitting there a long time. Maybe you could kick a soccer ball around." 👍



## Parent to Parent

### Helping others—from home

My daughter Leanne missed her volunteer work at our local animal shelter during the spring, so she poked around online and discovered that she can help animals from home.

At [dosomething.org](http://dosomething.org), Leanne signed up to do "Shelter pet PR." She searches online for local pets that need homes. Then, she posts their pictures and details (name, age, shelter contact information) on her social media accounts.

Now Leanne is exploring other online volunteer opportunities. She loves history, so next she plans to transcribe documents for the Library of Congress at [crowd.loc.gov](http://crowd.loc.gov). Anytime she wants, she can help out by hopping on the site and typing text from old newspapers and other historical papers that have been scanned in.

Leanne is adding to her résumé, which will help her on college and job applications. Plus she just heard that a cat she's advertising has found a home! 👍





October 2020

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## Short Clips

### Truth + tact

Teenagers sometimes follow up an unkind remark with "I'm just being honest!" Remind your high schooler that he can be honest *and* polite. If his grandmother gives him a sweater he doesn't like, for example, encourage him to find something nice to say that's still truthful, like "This will keep me really warm!"

### Simple study trick

At the end of the school day, your teen can "download" what she learned in each class onto one index card. Condensing her notes helps her pick out the most important information. She could store the cards with her class notes. They'll make useful study aids at test time.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Common Application, used by almost 900 colleges and universities, now includes an optional section where students may share how COVID-19 has impacted their lives. If your family faced illness or financial hardship, or your teenager was unable to complete schoolwork due to the pandemic, he could write about it on his application.

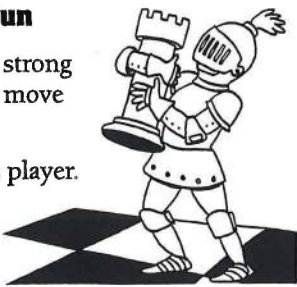
### Worth quoting

"You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water."  
*Rabindranath Tagore*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Who is strong enough to move a castle?

**A:** A chess player.



## Staying close through the teen years

How do you give your high schooler the space she needs while remaining close? It's an important puzzle to solve: Teenagers who stay connected to their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors and more likely to become responsible adults. Consider these solutions.

### Just knock

Teens spend a lot of time in their rooms, especially if they're home more often right now. Make it a point to occasionally knock on your child's door. Simply say, "Hey. How's it going?" or "I'm making smoothies. Want to join me?" She may invite you in or come out. Or she might not this time. Either way, she'll know you're there and she's important to you.

### Build bridges

Finding everyday ways to enjoy each other's company is key to staying close. Pay attention to things that interest your high schooler. Maybe she's into graphic



novels. Ask her to suggest one you'd like. Yoga? Follow along with a YouTube video together.

### Watch your "goodwill" balance

Having at least five positive interactions for every negative one is a proven secret to successful relationships. Aim to make "deposits" in your teen's goodwill "bank" throughout the day with warm interactions: a hug goodbye, a smile when she walks in, a compliment on her gaming skills. It might feel silly to keep count at first, but you'll get in the habit of showing you care. 👍

## Guess the geometry term

For a cool angle on geometry, play this version of the word game Taboo.

**1.** Get 20 index cards. On each card, have your teen write a geometry term (*octagon*) and five related words (*shape, eight, sides, vertices, stop sign*). Form teams of two, and divide the cards evenly.

**2.** Set a one-minute timer. One member of the first team picks a card and says clues to help his teammate guess the term, but he can't say the related—"taboo"—words! ("A square has four. What has twice as many?") Choose cards and guess until time's up.

**3.** Give everyone a turn to give *and* guess clues. The team that gets the most right wins. 👍



# Think critically

Knowing how to think critically about information will help your teenager in school and in life. Share these strategies.

**Focus on the facts.** When your child does research, encourage him to ask, “Can this information be proven?” and “How would I be able to prove it?” If he can’t think of a way to objectively prove a statement (“The Beatles were the best band of all time”), then it’s an opinion or an argument, not a fact. A fact would be “The Beatles



sold more than 500 million albums worldwide.”

**Consider viewpoints.** Hold a friendly debate to help your teen think critically about others’ perspectives. Does pineapple belong on pizza? Each of you should state your side and back it up with one fact. You might say, “Pizza toppings shouldn’t be sweet because pizza is a savory food.” Your teen could counter, “Most toppings *are* savory, but thanks to pineapple, you can order a pizza with all five food groups.” When you’ve finished debating, have either of your opinions changed? 👍

## Practice, s’il vous plaît!

*Si, ja, oui!* Here are ways for your high schooler to build her knowledge of a foreign language at home.

### Device settings

Suggest setting her smartphone’s voice assistant or her smart speaker to the language she’s studying. She’ll pick up vocabulary and pronunciation as she listens to the devices. And changing the language on video games and turning on language-specific closed captioning for TV lets her see and hear the words.

### Scavenger hunt

Send your teen on a search for household objects by giving her a list of them in the foreign language. (Use her textbook or a bilingual dictionary.) For French, you might include *le fromage* (cheese), *la fleur* (flower), and *le chapeau* (hat). Add colors like *rouge* (red) and *bleu* (blue) to make it more challenging. Can she find them all? 👍



Q & A

## Protect against cyberbullying

**Q** What should I do to help protect my daughter from cyberbullying?

**A** With teens spending more time online these days, that’s an important question to ask.

Make sure your daughter knows what cyberbullying is: using texts, social media, emails, or chat to hurt, embarrass, or threaten others. Explain that she should tell you right away if she’s targeted. She may fear that you’ll take away her devices or restrict social media access if she speaks up, so let her know that you’ll work with her to find a solution.

Knowing there are ways to deal with cyberbullying will help your high schooler feel in control. Point out that deleting the posts, blocking the poster, and reporting him or her to the website or service provider can help. And using privacy settings may head off trouble before it begins. 👍



Parent to Parent

## Coping with disappointment

My grandmother always said, “When one door closes, another one opens.” That’s something I’ve been sharing with my son Carter as he faces a lot of changes lately.

First, his summer coding camp was canceled because of the pandemic.

Then, his first-choice elective for this semester was canceled, too. I know Carter was disappointed, but I also know he’ll have to handle challenges throughout life.

I suggested asking himself two questions when he’s dealing with something unexpected: “How can I make this work?” and “What good can come of this?” Carter decided he could take an online coding class. And he realized he got a chance to try an elective he

wouldn’t have taken otherwise. So far he’s loving his entrepreneurial skills class. Now he thinks it will help him launch a tech start-up someday! 👍



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## Short Clips

### Almost perfect

Wanting to make an assignment "perfect"

can keep your teen from finishing. If she's struggling to write the ideal introduction to her paper or find the just-right word for a poem, suggest that she set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes and write *something*. After that, she has to move on. Remind her that she can always revise it later.

### Non-food rewards

Using food as a reward can send your teen the wrong message. He might connect sugary foods with happiness—which can set him up for unhealthy eating habits. The next time you want to celebrate his hard work, consider letting him choose a special activity like Rollerblading instead.

### Prepare for conferences

Some advance planning can help you get the most out of meetings with teachers. Ask your high schooler how she's feeling about her classes, then work together on a list of questions to ask during conferences. Add anything you'd like to mention. You'll be sure to touch on the most important points.

### Worth quoting

"Try to be a rainbow in someone else's cloud." *Maya Angelou*

### Just for fun

**Aunt Mary:** Have you grown another foot since the last time I saw you?

**Simon:** No. I still have just two.



## Make reading an everyday thing

How important is it to get your high schooler in the habit of reading? In fact, just an extra 15 minutes each day can build his vocabulary and boost his writing skills. Try these ideas to add more reading to his routine.

### Provide materials

See an interesting headline? Ask your teenager to read the article to you while you're making dinner. Download audiobooks to enjoy together in the car. And leave books, newspapers, and magazines on the kitchen table for him to pick up while he's eating breakfast or a snack.

### Create rituals

One way to start a family reading routine is to do it around the same time, whether it's daily, weekly, or monthly. You might designate the half-hour after dinner "Read What You Like!" time, when everyone sits with a favorite book. The last Saturday of the month could be "book-to-



film" night, when you watch a movie based on a book you read together (check out ideas at [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org)).

### Pursue interests

Teens often enjoy becoming experts on a topic. So encourage your high schooler to dig deeper into his interests by reading about them. If he's a video game fan, he might like a book about programming pioneers or articles about new technology. Music lover? A book about the history of his favorite genre or music copyright law could hold his interest. 👍

## Nurture gratitude

Talk about a win-win situation: The more grateful your teen is, the happier she's likely to be! Here's how to help her develop an "attitude of gratitude."

**Find a simple reminder.** Suggest that your child choose a small object like a smooth pebble as her "gratitude token." Whenever she sees or touches it, she'll remember to think of the good things in her life. Or she could program her phone or smart speaker to ask each night, "What were you thankful for today, Melissa?"

**Play games.** Take turns secretly choosing something you're thankful for and illustrating it (Pictionary-style) for others to guess. Or line up three paper cups labeled "Person," "Place," and "Thing." Alternate tossing a coin toward them, then naming something you're thankful for (and why!) in the category where it lands. 👍



# Getting ready for the real world

Whatever your teen's next step after high school is, she'll need "adulting" skills before she heads off on her own. Set her on the right path by teaching her these two skills now.

**Lesson 1: Meal planning and preparation.** Work together to compile a binder of simple, healthy meals that she can keep forever. Create sections for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. Have her search magazines and the internet



to find at least five recipes for each. Invite her to test each recipe by making it for the family. She could add comments like "Budget-friendly" or "Microwave meal."

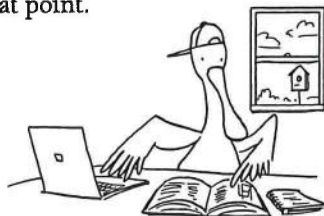
**Lesson 2: Basic car maintenance.** If your teen is like many young adults, a car will be her first big asset. Keeping it in good shape can head off costly repairs. Explain how you take care of the family car. Show her how to check the tire pressure, fill air in tires at the gas station, refill wiper fluid, understand warning lights on the dashboard, and take it in for oil changes and other maintenance. Then put your teen in charge of some of those tasks for your car. 👍

## Q & A

### End homework battles

**Q** If I don't stay on top of my son about homework, it doesn't get done. Shouldn't he be handling it on his own?

**A** Ideally, your high schooler should be in charge of his own homework. But he might need your help in getting to that point.



Start by asking, "What's your plan for getting your homework done every night?" Phrasing it that way lets him know it's his responsibility. If he's not sure, share ideas and talk about ways to address problems. He might start earlier if he's often too tired to finish, or he could form a homework circle with classmates to call on for help.

You might need to keep tabs for a while—reminding him to start homework and having him show you when he's done. Then eventually, you can start to step back as he steps up. 👍

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## Parent to Parent

### Make sense of marijuana laws

My son Oliver showed me an article about marijuana legalization on state ballots this election. He wondered why the ballot measures would make marijuana legal for adults, but not teens.

I wasn't certain how to answer, so I did some research and shared what I learned. I explained that scientists say marijuana poses special dangers for teens because their brains are still developing. Also, teenagers are more likely to engage in other risky behaviors when they use marijuana.

Then I pointed out that just because something is legal doesn't always mean it's safe or smart. Oliver replied, "Like vaping?" so I knew he was really listening. I said, "Yes!" I think he understands the risks and rules for marijuana, but it's a conversation we'll keep having. 👍



## Learning in the great outdoors

If fall's cooler days have your high schooler eager to get outside, share these ways she can mix learning with nature.

### Examine an ecosystem

Suggest that your teen get a field guide or download a nature app, then select a natural ecosystem to explore, perhaps your backyard, a park, or a pond. How many species of plants and animals can she identify? How do they form a system that works together (maybe the birds eat the insects)? What changes does she notice as fall turns into winter?



### Be a citizen scientist

Encourage your child to take part in a crowd-sourced nature project. She'll help scientists document, track, and protect nature while sharpening her science skills. She could share findings about birds ([celebrateurbanbirds.org](http://celebrateurbanbirds.org)), monitor the life cycles of plants or animals ([usanpn.org](http://usanpn.org)), or document light pollution by submitting data on constellations ([globeatnight.org](http://globeatnight.org)). Have her check out [nationalgeographic.org/idea/citizen-science-projects](http://nationalgeographic.org/idea/citizen-science-projects) for more ideas. 👍



December 2020

# High School YEARS

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## Short Clips

### Collaborative tales

Spark your teen's creativity—and motivate him to write—with this idea. On the first page of a notebook, write a story starter. ("Some very curious things happened that holiday season!") Leave it on the coffee table, and invite everyone to add to the tale. After a week, your child could read it aloud and begin a new story.

### Game-ify study time

Making and playing this game will help your high schooler study. Have her draw a grid, write a question in each box, and add point values. If she's studying physics, she might score 5 points for correctly answering "What is a wave?" and 15 points for "What kind of wave can travel through a vacuum?" How many points can she score?

### Be a thoughtful listener

"Mirroring" your teenager's words (without judgment) can keep him from shutting down a conversation. If he says, "Nothing's the same this year," you could reply, "I know you're upset that things aren't how you expected." You'll encourage him to talk through his feelings.

### Worth quoting

"Find the good that's all around you. Find it, showcase it, and you'll start believing in it." *Jesse Owens*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Where do polar bears keep their money?

**A:** In a snowbank!



## Setting limits for teens

A clear set of rules gives your high schooler a simple, everyday way to know what you expect her to do—or not do. And that can ease tensions for everyone (no more daily battles over curfew!). Try these ideas to establish guidelines.

### Work backward

Think about any issues that come up regularly. Are chores not being done? Do you always need to tell your teen to put her phone away at dinner? Focus your list on rules that address these concerns. ("Meals are family time, so leave phones in another room.")

### Involve your teenager

Your teenager is more likely to view rules as fair—and follow them—if she feels her voice is heard. Say you tell her that she needs to be home (or offline) by 9 p.m. on school nights. Then, let her speak ("Special events should be different"). Make adjustments if you can ("Okay, we'll add 'unless we agree otherwise'").

### Powerful presentations

Your high schooler worked hard on the written portion of his presentation. But he's not done yet! Offer these tips for sharing it with the class.

■ **Watch your speed.** Talking too fast makes your teen hard to understand. Suggest that he aim for 100–150 words per minute. *Practice:* Encourage him to read aloud for 1 minute, then count the words he read.

■ **Talk, don't recite.** Reading a script word-for-word keeps your high schooler from engaging his audience. *Practice:* Have him rehearse his presentation until he can deliver it using only bullet points on notecards or slides. 👍



### Explain why

Teens may have a better attitude toward a rule if they understand it's meant to protect them rather than "control" them. If your rule is that she must let you know where she's going, point out that you want to ensure she's safe.

### Stick to consequences

Seek your high schooler's input here, too: What does she think is a reasonable consequence for playing video games before finishing homework and chores? Aim for consequences tied to each rule ("No video games for two days"). 👍



# Working with the school counselor

Counselors are a vital part of your high schooler's education team. That's especially true now with the COVID-19 challenges. Here's how your teenager can get the most from this resource.

**What services do counselors provide?** It's a long list! Counselors do everything from helping your teen select the right classes to providing community-based mental-health referrals. Not sure if a particular service is offered at your child's school? Just ask.



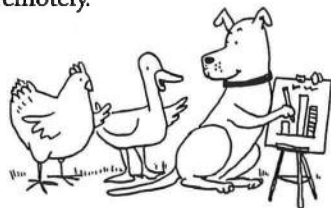
**How can we work with the counselor during the pandemic?** You or your teen could call the school or check the website for contact information. Your high schooler may make appointments to meet with his counselor in person or virtually. Parents can also contact the counselor with questions.

**What about college and career planning?** Helping students plan for life after high school is a big part of a counselor's role. COVID-19 caused a lot of changes to SAT and ACT requirements, the college admissions process, and career and technical education programs. Encourage your teen to reach out to his counselor for guidance and up-to-date information. 👍

## Q & A Tips for teamwork

**Q** The last time my daughter did a group project, she ended up frustrated because she'd done most of the work. Any suggestions for her next one?

**A** Group projects teach valuable skills like teamwork and communication. The shared approach can present challenges, though, especially if students are working remotely.



First, encourage your high schooler to pick her teammates carefully. It's natural for kids to choose friends or people they have things in common with. But an orchestra, for example, wouldn't want only violinists! If your teen is great at research, is there a classmate who's good with graphics? Selecting people who work hard and meet deadlines is important, too.

Once your teenager's team is in place, a detailed plan assigning each person a specific responsibility and firm deadline can keep them organized. Also, holding regular group calls will help ensure that everyone participates. 👍

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## Prevent new-driver mistakes

Help your teen stay safer on the road by teaching her to avoid these common errors.

### Speeding

It's important for your high schooler to obey speed limits and regularly check the speedometer. Remind her that posted limits are the maximum for good conditions. If the roads are wet or icy, she'll need to slow down.



### Following too closely

Keeping a safe distance from other cars can prevent accidents. Have your teenager glance at the car in front of her, choose a landmark (overpass, billboard), and count the seconds between when that car passes the landmark and when your car does. If it's less than 2-4 seconds (in good weather), she should slow down.

### Getting distracted

Losing focus behind the wheel contributes to 80 percent of new-driver collisions. Set safety rules such as no teen passengers and no texting in the car. 👍

## Parent to Parent Homemade gifts

A few years ago, my family started a new holiday tradition: We all make one gift for each other. At first, it was just to save money. But it's become something my kids, Santiago and Ana, really enjoy—plus, they're discovering new ways to be creative.

Last year, Santiago made bookmarks for me and crafted a bracelet for Ana from twine and washers. He was touched by the

game-storage box Ana decorated for him, and he helped her bake me a batch of cookies. And I've knitted a beanie for Santiago and made bath bombs for Ana.

Even though we give some store-bought gifts, the homemade presents are a highlight. Santiago pointed out that those are the ones we remember because they're made with love. 👍





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## Short Clips

### Tasty probability

On a platter with 4 red, 6 blue, and 5 yellow cookies, what is the probability someone will randomly grab a blue or yellow cookie? Your teen can add up all the cookies ( $4 + 6 + 5 = 15$ ), determine what fraction are blue or yellow ( $\frac{11}{15}$ ), and convert the fraction to a percent:  $11 \div 15 \times 100 = 73.3$  percent. Let her test it over dessert!

### Sit up straight

Good posture can improve your teen's mood and boost his memory and learning. Remind him to sit up straight, pull his shoulders back, and lift his chin. If he tends to slouch over his laptop, have him try adjusting his chair height or putting the computer on a stack of books.

### A parenting circle

With all the changes to this school year, having a supportive network of fellow parents can be a welcome relief. Reach out to neighbors and the parents of your teen's friends to see who is interested in regular video chats. You can exchange tips and advice about virtual learning and other challenges.

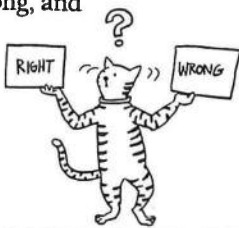
### Worth quoting

"If you knew how much work went into it, you wouldn't call it genius."  
Michelangelo

### Just for fun

**Q:** Call me right, and you'll be wrong. But call me wrong, and you'll be right. What am I?

**A:** The word wrong.



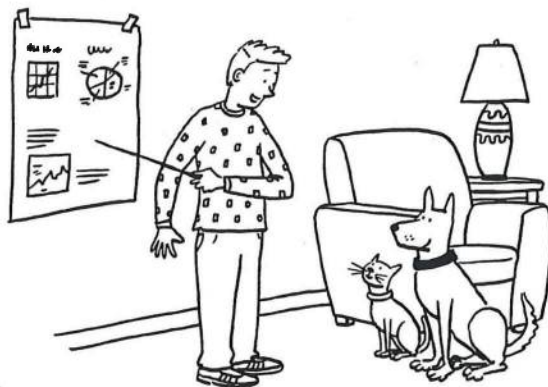
## Study strategies that work

Help your teenager get the most from his study sessions—and do his best on quizzes and tests—with these smart ideas.

### Condense notes

Flipping through piles of notes and pages of highlighted text wastes your teen's time and keeps him from focusing on what's important. Instead, encourage him to comb through each set of notes for key points and turn them into a study guide.

*Tip:* Summarizing the information in his own words, instead of copying it from notes or a textbook, will help him understand it better.



### Speak up

Saying something out loud is one of the best ways to remember it. Your child could record himself explaining the different types of chemical bonds or singing his summary of major moments in the Reconstruction era to a familiar tune. Challenge him to come up with his own clever ideas for studying.

### Be the teacher

Teaching someone else is another proven way to understand a subject. Suggest that your high schooler form a study group where members take turns explaining concepts. He could also use a whiteboard or poster board and pretend to teach someone (stuffed animals or the family dog will do!)—or teach you. Maybe he'll make an outline of a novel or show how to find the slope of a tangent. 👍

## Take initiative

Teens with initiative get things done without being reminded and find their own ways to stretch themselves. Share these ideas to help your high schooler develop this trait.

### Notice what needs to be done.

Encourage your teen to step up on her own instead of waiting to be asked or told. If she mentions that the trash can is full, try saying, "Thanks. I trust you to handle it."

**Go beyond "good enough."** Suggest that your high schooler think about what she could do to make an assignment a bit better. Maybe she can find a primary-source document online for her history paper rather than just using material from her textbook. 👍



# Social media and self-esteem

From counting “likes” to comparing lives, social media can make teens feel like they don’t measure up. Here’s how to help your high schooler use her online accounts in a healthier way.

**Put feedback in perspective.** Writing something unkind just to rack up retweets or posting a “prettier” picture to get more “likes” puts other people’s judgment above her own. Ask your child to think about her followers. If she needed to make an important decision, would she trust them for advice? If not, why would she judge herself by how they react to her posts?

**Do a reality check.** Have your teen notice things throughout the day that she might post a



photo of (her perfect omelet) and things she wouldn’t want others to see (the toast she burned). Point out that others have plenty of each kind of these moments, too.

**Step back and assess.**

For one week, suggest that your high schooler keep track of how she feels (happy, stressed, angry, amused, jealous) each time she checks social media. If she doesn’t like the results, ask her what she could do differently (turn off notifications, close certain accounts). 👍

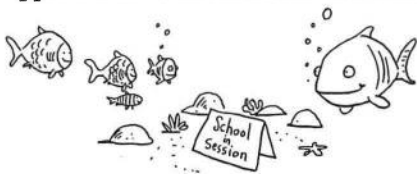


## Every class counts

Attendance is one of the strongest indicators of school success. The more classes your high schooler attends, the better he’s likely to do. Head off excuses with these ideas.

**“I need a mental health day.”**

If you hear this a lot from your teen, talk about what’s really going on. He might be behind on his assignments or having difficulty with a classmate. Try to work with him to address his concerns. Help him come up with a home-work plan, for example, or make an appointment with his school counselor.



**“Online classes don’t matter.”**

They certainly do! At this point in the year, your child may need a change of scenery like he’d have if he were switching classes in school. If possible, let him find another quiet spot in the house (living room, kitchen table) where he could do a class or two each day. He should make sure to keep supplies he needs with him as he changes rooms. 👍

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Resources for Educators, a division of CCH Incorporated  
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 www.rfeonline.com  
 ISSN 1540-5605

**Parent to Parent**

## Family meals: A priority

As my daughter Lydia got older, family dinners often got squeezed out by busy schedules. But when I read that teenagers who regularly eat with their families are less likely to drink, smoke, or use drugs, I made eating together a priority again.

To keep things fun and help with planning, we made a “theme jar.” Everyone wrote ideas for interesting dinners on slips of paper, and we pull one out each week. Our favorite idea so far was a “safari supper,” with appetizers in the living room, the main course at the table, and dessert in the yard.

I also asked Lydia to come up with conversation starters. She taped paper over a game spinner and wrote questions on it like “If you opened a restaurant, what would it be called, and what would be on the menu?” We spin it during dinner and share our answers.

It’s still not always easy to get everyone to the table, but we’re having some good conversations with Lydia and it’s helping us stay connected. 👍



## Yes, grammar is still important

**Q** My son’s texts and emails are filled with grammatical mistakes. The other day, he wrote, “Whose picking me up mom.” How can I convince him that proper grammar matters in any kind of writing?

**A** Maybe he’s heard that we shouldn’t judge a book by its cover. But people will judge him by how he presents himself in writing. And those people could be college admissions

officers or potential employers who might wonder about his qualifications.

If your son argues that posts and emails are meant to be casual, point out that there’s a difference between casual (swapping in “Hello” for “Dear sir”) and sloppy (“My teacher’s say good stuff re me”).

Poor grammar can also distract from his message. And sometimes, it can confuse the message entirely: “Let’s eat Grandpa!” instead of “Let’s eat, Grandpa!” (Poor Grandpa!) Challenge your son to find other funny examples. 👍





# High School YEARS

Working Together for Lifelong Success



## Short Clips

### Money lesson

Talk with your high schooler about the expenses that come with using a car. Show him your insurance bill, for example, and explain how it's calculated (safe-driver discount, number of people covered). Go over the maintenance schedule and how much the services cost. *Tip:* Have him use his own money to refill the gas tank when he drives.

### Crafty organizer

This idea will help your teen keep track of her busy schedule at a glance. Have her paint seven wooden clothespins different colors, then write a day of the week on each. She can clip the clothespins to twine strung along her bedroom wall and easily attach note cards with each day's activities. ("Math test today!")

### Summer programs

It's not too soon for your teenager to start thinking about a summer learning program. Whether he's hoping to earn college credit, sharpen his engineering skills, or learn tae kwon do, there are plenty of choices. Many have March deadlines, and some may offer a limited number of scholarships. So have him talk to his school counselor now about options.

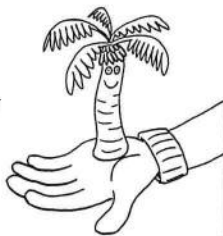
### Worth quoting

"Patience is also a form of action."  
Auguste Rodin

### Just for fun

**Q:** What kind of tree can you grow in your hand?

**A:** A palm tree!



## Ways to show kindness

Now more than ever, treating people with kindness can really make a difference in people's lives. Here are everyday ways for your teen to be kind to family, friends, and strangers.

### Add it to the list

Have your teenager write an act of kindness on her to-do list. She might make a note to shovel a neighbor's walk or to color with her little brother. At the end of the day, she can feel good about checking the act off her list.

### Use your (kind) words

Ask your child how she feels when someone greets her kindly. Remembering that good feeling may inspire her to do the same to others. For example, in the drive-thru at a restaurant, pharmacy, or bank, she could say, "Hi, how's your day going?" to the cashier or teller.

### Make a kinder online world

Suggest that your high schooler send someone a personal message to



say how much she liked a post. ("I watched the video of you playing piano. It was beautiful!") *Idea:* Have her pick one day each week to spread kindness online.

### Give the benefit of the doubt

There is kindness in thinking the best of people. If your teen is annoyed that a friend read her text but didn't reply, encourage her to consider what the cause might be. Perhaps her friend's phone battery died or a parent needed her help. 🙌

## More reasons to love the library

Your teenager probably knows the public library is full of great books. But does he know about the other amazing (free!) things it offers? Share these ideas.

**Clubs.** Encourage him to join a book club for teens, virtually or in person. The library may also have clubs centered on interests like creative writing, chess, or coding. He can get to know like-minded people while he learns.

**Online content.** Most libraries provide online access to e-books, audiobooks, magazines, and even music. The library website will have details on how to download free apps for reading or listening on a phone, tablet, or computer. 🙌



# Math strategies

Algebra? Geometry? Calculus? No matter which math class your high schooler takes, strategies like these will help him do his best.

**Stick with it 'til you get it.** Each math skill builds on those that came before it. So your teen needs to master factoring equations in algebra before he can find the roots of a function in calculus. If something isn't clear in class, encourage him to ask his teacher questions until it is. If he's stuck on a homework problem, suggest calling a "math buddy" to talk through the solution.



**Make a glossary.** Have your child keep a notebook or computer file of math vocabulary and formulas. He could include sample problems with each entry, as well as the acronyms he'll use to remember formulas. *Example:* "PEMDAS = Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally" for the order of operations. He can add to his glossary regularly and consult it when he does homework.

**Get comfortable with the calculator.** Suggest that your teen draw a large diagram of his graphing calculator on poster board. Next to each key, he might write what it is (say, square root), what it does, and examples of problems that require it. Then, he could hang the diagram by his desk. 👍

## Fun with geography

It's a big world out there. Here are two ways to encourage your teen's interest in geography:

■ Post a map on your kitchen wall. Suggest that your child circle places she's learning about in history or the settings of novels she reads in English. If she loves baseball, she could also circle each city that has a major-league team. And a movie buff can find the locations where her favorite films were shot.



■ Play geography games while waiting for a pizza delivery or sitting in traffic. *Examples:* Take turns thinking of countries for each letter of the alphabet. Challenge each other to identify state or world capitals. Name a landmark, and see who can be first to tell where it's located. 👍

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## Q & A

### Ask about school (and get answers)

**Q** I want to know how things are going for my daughter in school. But it's like pulling teeth to get anything besides "fine." Any ideas?

**A** It's great that you want to stay in the loop. Teens whose parents are involved in their education tend to have better grades and fewer behavioral problems.

Some prep work might help. Over breakfast or in the car, ask what she has coming up that day. Then, use that information to head off the dreaded "fine." Instead of "What did you do today?" you'll be able to ask, "You had your presentation today, right? What part did you think went best?"

Not every question will result in a detailed answer. But regular small conversations can add up to a fuller picture of your daughter's school life. 👍



## Parent to Parent

### Fit and "green"

Our family likes to stay active, but it's hard to find the motivation to get outdoors in the winter. My son Rob suggested "plogging"—or picking up litter while jogging. He explained that it first became popular in Sweden, then spread all over the world as a way for people to help the environment and get exercise.

So we put on gloves, grabbed some bags, and went for a "plog." We quickly discovered that

bending and squatting to pick up trash gave us more of a workout than just jogging!

This has become a regular thing for our family. Sometimes we go "plicking"—picking up litter while hiking. Knowing we're making a difference in our neighborhood while getting fit gives us the boost we need to actually get out and get active! 👍

