

High School Parents[®]

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Shelton Youth Service Bureau

still make the difference!



Use a school-year review to help your teen set new goals

Consider reviewing this school year with your teen as this academic year draws to a close. This will give him a benchmark to use as he sets academic goals for next year.

Schedule time to sit down with your teen to discuss how he views his progress this past year:

- **Did he do as well** as he had hoped he would?
- **Does he feel** that his report card reflects what he learned?
- **What was his favorite class** and why?
- **What was his least favorite class** and why?

Then, ask your teen what he would like to improve. For example, would he like to earn a higher grade in

English next year? Encourage your teen to come up with a list of goals he'd like to accomplish and have him write them down.

Next, work together to list steps your teen will have to take to reach each goal. Is there anything he can do now to work toward these goals? For example, he might take a writing class at a local community college over the summer to strengthen his writing skills.

Whatever plan he comes up with, be sure to support him along the way. Knowing that you have high expectations—and that you believe in him—is great motivation for your teen to work hard so he can reach his goals.

A summer job can reinforce skills for success



A summer job may be your teen's first step into the workforce. It can help her prepare for the

demands and responsibilities of the real world. It can also teach her many valuable lessons about respect and responsibility—important ingredients for school success.

A summer job can teach your teen how to:

- **Be on time.** Others will depend on your teen to show up when expected. Punctuality demonstrates responsibility.
- **Work with others.** Your teen will have to get along with others and take direction from a supervisor.
- **Be respectful.** Many entry-level jobs involve working with the public. Your teen will need to be polite and helpful to all kinds of people—even those who may not treat her with the same respect.
- **Think about her future.** Experience in a job can help your teen decide if a line of work is right for her.

Find out if your teen's lack of effort is really a sign of trouble



"I just didn't feel like doing it," your teen says when you find out he hasn't been turning in his math homework.

Does he just lack motivation, or is it something else?

A lack of effort can actually be a cover-up for a more serious problem. Some teens will go to great lengths to keep parents and teachers from seeing that they are having trouble with a subject. They'll often pretend that they don't care. They'll act like class clowns. They'll "forget" their homework day after day.

If this sounds like your teen, it's time to take a closer look. Ask your

teen what's really going on. And talk to his teachers, too.

If it turns out that your teen is struggling in a class, take action now. See if he can work with a tutor or stay after class to get some extra help. Perhaps he can take a summer class to brush up on a subject. Knowing the real problem is the first step to fixing it.

"Strength and growth come only through continuous effort and struggle."

—Napoleon Hill

Establish limits for your teen's screen time over the summer



Today's teens average nine hours a day of recreational screen time! Texting with friends has replaced hanging out

at the park. Watching Netflix has replaced reading for fun. But that doesn't mean your teen has to join the crowd.

Take four steps to help your teen monitor and limit his recreational screen time this summer:

1. **Ask your teen** to pay close attention to how he uses media. How many hours per week does he spend watching TV and browsing social media? Have him keep track of his time on a chart for one week. He may be surprised by how much time he actually spends staring at a screen.
2. **Find out what your teen** is doing. New video games come out every

month. Take a look at the games your teen is playing and check the age ratings. Make sure you are aware of the websites he visits online, too.

3. **Encourage your teen** to become a critical viewer. When watching television, he should question what he sees. Would he act the same way the main character did? Does he think that movie's violence was necessary to develop the plot?
4. **Offer your teen** other choices. Suggest that he have friends over instead of talking to them online for hours at a time. And always have plenty of reading materials around for him to view instead of television shows or videos.

Source: "The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens," Common Sense Media, nswc.com/high_media.

Are you helping your teen resist peer pressure?



Peer pressure is a fact of life for teens. It can be positive: Your teen decides to volunteer because her friends do.

But it can also be negative: Your teen skips a class because her friend does.

Are you helping your teen resist negative peer pressure? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ 1. **Do you tell your teen** to take pride in her accomplishments by saying things like, "You should be proud of yourself for?"
- ___ 2. **Do you encourage your teen** to sign up for classes and activities that actually interest her?
- ___ 3. **Do you remind your teen** to respect herself and to avoid doing anything that will make her lose that self-respect?
- ___ 4. **Do you encourage your teen** to think of herself as an individual?
- ___ 5. **Do you help your teen** practice different ways to say *no*?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you're doing a great job of helping your teen resist negative peer pressure. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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The Parent Institute®, 1-800-756-5525,
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Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.
Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.
Editor: Rebecca Hasty Miyares.
Illustrator: Joe Mignella.

Encourage your teen to exercise and stay healthy this summer



Does your teen think she is going to sleep all day, every day during summer break? Don't let her waste her summer!

Encourage your teen to get some exercise. It only takes 21 days for a habit to form—and daily exercise is a great habit to have.

Teens who exercise regularly:

- **Earn better grades.**
- **Are less likely** to become overweight.
- **Have stronger bones** and muscles.
- **Sleep better** than those who don't exercise regularly.
- **Have higher self-esteem.**
- **Are less stressed** and better able to handle problems.

The key is to make exercise fun.

Your teen doesn't have to run nine

miles every day (unless she really enjoys running). She can split her workout time into shorter bursts.

Maybe she'd prefer to walk for 15 minutes in the morning and swim at the local pool for 30 minutes later in the day. Or maybe your teen and her friends would like to join a summer sports league. Then they'd experience the benefits of exercising their bodies and their social skills at the same time.

And while your teen is exercising, make sure she has the proper fuel for her body. The summer is a great time to incorporate water, fresh fruits and vegetables into her diet.

Source: I. Esteban-Cornejo and others, "Independent and Combined Influence of the Components of Physical Fitness on Academic Performance in Youth," *The Journal of Pediatrics*.

Show your teen how to manage year-end school assignments



Your teen is probably faced with an array of finals and year-end projects as this school year draws to a close.

Having so much homework can be daunting.

Here are tips to help your teen keep end-of-year assignments manageable:

- **Homework comes first.** Some students like to do homework as soon as they get home from school. Others work better after some time to unwind. Still others are at their best later at night. But homework must get done on time. It must have top priority.
- **Keep track of key dates.** Few students can remember when

all of their assignments need to be turned in without writing down due dates. Your teen should write everything down in a planner or calendar and check it daily.

- **Jot down reminder notes** during the school day. Writing "Bring history book home tonight" on a sticky note and sticking it to the front of her notebook really can help your teen remember to bring the book home.
- **Be careful about distractions.** The TV, the phone and the internet may not be a problem when your teen has a lesser workload. But at the end of the school year, when her workload has increased, she should make a stronger effort to avoid distractions.

Q: My son is a junior in high school and can't seem to make up his mind about anything! How can I help him learn how to make a decision?

Questions & Answers

A: Growing up means making decisions. That's tough for most teens. But for some, it can lead to almost total paralysis.

To help your son learn to make decisions:

- **Give him** opportunities to make low-risk decisions. Suppose he is responsible for mowing the lawn every week. On Monday, say, "The lawn needs mowing before this weekend. You decide when you want to mow it." Don't nag him during the week. Let him decide when to mow the lawn. And when he does, be sure to thank him.
- **Teach him** to write down the pros and cons. When he's faced with a choice, have him make a list of the positives and negatives for each option. Often, seeing things written down makes the choice easier.
- **Remind him** that mistakes are just opportunities to learn. Some teens are afraid to make a decision because they are worried about making the wrong one. Let your son know that in life, things don't always work out the way we plan—and that's OK. He will learn something from any choice he makes, even if it's simply what *not to do* next time.
- **Help him** set deadlines for his decisions. "You have until Tuesday to decide if you want to accept Mr. Smith's job offer."

It Matters: Summer Learning

Summer school benefits teens in three ways



Your teen may be looking forward to a summer job. Or he may be thinking about taking a break from his studies. But there are some reasons he may want to consider summer school instead.

While summer school isn't for every student, it can help teens:

1. **Master a difficult subject.** If your teen anticipates that a science or math class is going to be a big challenge for him, taking it in the summer will allow him to concentrate on it. This can be a great option for students who want to make sure they earn good grades for college admission.
2. **Gain credits** toward graduation. If your teen failed a course, summer school will give him an opportunity to take it again. Or if he has been in classes for English language learners, he may want to try a regular English class.
3. **Free up space** for an art or music class. During the regular school year, a student in a demanding academic program may not have room for music or art. Taking a required class in the summer will allow him to include these enriching classes in his school-year schedule.

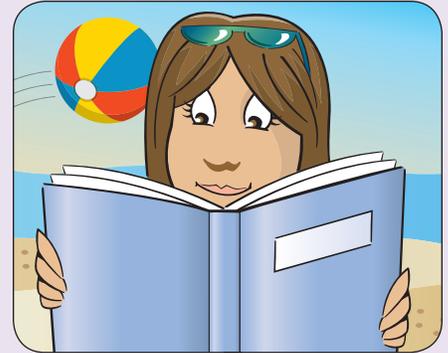
If your teen decides to take a class over the summer, make sure he understands how important it will be to complete his homework and assigned reading. Because summer classes are taught in such a short time period, missing even one day's homework can put him far behind.

Studies show summer reading improves student achievement

Teens love summer. They look forward to vacations, no classes and time with their friends. But summer can also leave teens with too much time on their hands. Research shows that they strongly benefit from time spent reading.

This summer:

- **Challenge your teen** to read at least four books. One study found that the more books students read during the summer, the higher their academic gains.
- **Encourage your teen** to keep track of new words she learns. Teens who read one million words a year add at least a thousand words to their vocabularies. And it doesn't matter what they read.
- **Go to the library** often with your teen. Students who use



the library over the summer are more likely to read regularly than those who do not.

- **Ask your teen to write reviews** of what she reads. Writing reviews can help her improve her comprehension and strengthen the writing skills she needs for school success.

Source: K. Houck and A. Simon, "Highlights of Research on Summer Reading and Effects on Student Achievement," New York State Library, nyslc.com/high_summerread.

Help your teen create a plan to tackle summer assignments



Many high school teachers require students to do an assignment over the summer. Support your teen by encouraging him to:

- **Review the assignment** before the school year ends. That way he can get clarification if something is unclear. He should also make sure he has contact information for the teacher.
- **Make sure he has what he needs.** If your teen must read a book for his assignment, he should get it

early. The library and bookstores may run out of the title if he waits too long.

- **Start early.** Some teens put off their assignments until the last few days of the summer. That usually leads to sleepless nights and rushed work. Help your teen create a plan that will allow him to finish early.
- **Give his best effort.** Remind your teen that first impressions matter. This assignment will help shape what next year's teacher thinks of him.