

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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Shelton Youth Service Bureau

*still make the difference!*



## Resolutions can help teens achieve their academic goals

January is the month for making New Year's resolutions. People plan to do things like lose weight, get more active or get better grades. But by February, most have scrapped their resolutions.

As your teen thinks about his future, help him use this time to move closer to his academic goals. Share the following ways your teen can keep his New Year's resolutions and turn his dreams into realities:

- **Remember Janus.** The Roman god Janus, who gave his name to this month, looked both forward and back. That's a good first step for your teen to take. What goals did he meet during the past year? How was he able to achieve them?

What lessons can he learn that will be helpful in the new year?

- **See the goal.** What would your teen's success look like? The more vivid a picture he can paint in his mind's eye, the more likely he is to achieve it.
- **Write the goal.** Once your teen has a goal in mind, have him write it down on paper. This is the first step to creating a plan to achieve the goal.
- **Break it down.** Big goals can't be achieved in a day. Your young scholar is not likely to earn a college scholarship this week. But he can work on building the good habits that will get him on the right path.

## Show your teen how to use a study organizer



There are a lot of terms to learn in science class. What's the difference between *mitosis* and *meiosis*? How is a *nebula* different from a *star*?

A study organizer is a tool your teen can use to help her learn new science terms or vocabulary for any class. Here's how she can create one:

Take a sheet of paper. Fold it in half the long way. Use scissors to cut from the front edges of the paper toward the fold to make five or six tabs.

Your teen should write a word she needs to learn on each tab. Then she can fold back each tab and write the definition of the word on the paper behind it.

When your teen is studying, she can put the folded paper next to a blank sheet of paper. As she writes each definition on the new sheet, she can flip the tab to see if she's correct.

Later, she can reverse the process and open all of the tabs so the paper lies flat. She can look at a definition. Which word does it define? She can flip the tab back to check!

## Keep five strategies in mind when it comes to teens and discipline



Your high schooler has matured a lot since his elementary school days, but he still has a long way to go. The part of his brain that controls impulses and helps him make good decisions is not mature yet. That's one reason why teens need structure and discipline.

Your efforts to teach your teen how to maintain control will pay off in all settings, especially home and school. Remember to:

### 1. Expect difficult moments.

When your teen acts first and thinks later, blurts out the wrong thing or is moody, it's not necessarily because he wants to hurt you. Try not to take it personally.

2. **Be firm, yet flexible**, with your teen. Make sure he knows the limits and the consequences for violating them. Consider granting him more freedom as he shows more responsibility.

3. **Always know where your teen is**, who he is with, what he is doing and when he will be home.
4. **Distinguish** between an *explanation* and an *excuse*. Your teen's age and brain growth may provide an explanation for some of his behavior. But they are not an excuse for being rude or defiant.
5. **Focus on the big issues**. These include things like schoolwork, safety and respect for others. Try not to nag your teen about the smaller issues, such as the occasional messy room.

Source: D. Walsh, Ph.D., *Why Do They Act That Way? A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen*, Atria Books.

**“Good habits formed at youth make all the difference.”**

—Aristotle

## Let your teen know that there is no such thing as ‘no homework’



When your teen is in high school, there is always *something* she can do to keep up with her schoolwork. So if she comes home from school and announces that she has no homework, encourage her to spend 30 minutes to an hour on one of the following activities:

- **Get started** on a long-term project. It's never too early. And it's great to be able to start something when there's less pressure.
- **Read a chapter** for a second time, or look back through last

week's notes. She'll be amazed at how much better the information will stick in her mind if she looks at it when she's relaxed.

- **Create a test** from her books and notes. Or ask you to quiz her.
- **Practice math problems**. Or look up some vocabulary words the teacher hasn't yet assigned.
- **Write something**. It could be a story, a poem, a journal entry or a letter to a friend.
- **Read something**. Whether it's a classic book or a news magazine, *any* reading is worthwhile.

Source: R. Dellabough, *101 Ways To Get Straight A's*, Troll Associates.

## Are you teaching your teen skills for school success?



Her teachers will make sure your teen can write an essay or solve for  $x$ . But as a parent, you teach other lessons that are just as important to your teen's high school success. Are you teaching your teen the skills she needs to achieve? Answer *yes* or *no* to each question below to find out:

\_\_\_ 1. **Do you help** your teen make good use of time by encouraging her to write due dates on a calendar and keep a daily to-do list in her planner?

\_\_\_ 2. **Have you made sure** that both you and your teen understand the school rules?

\_\_\_ 3. **Have you talked** with your teen about peer pressure and role-played ways she can say *no*?

\_\_\_ 4. **Have you told** your teen that she can always talk to you when she needs help or advice?

\_\_\_ 5. **Have you discussed** with your teen the importance of getting to school on time?

**How well are you doing?**

If most of your answers were *yes*, you are setting your teen up for success. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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# Share the facts about underage drinking with your high schooler



According to recent underage drinking statistics, about 65 percent of teens have had at least one drink

by the time they are 18. And research shows that teenage drinking is a much greater health problem than many parents realize.

For example:

- **Teens who start drinking** before the age of 15 are twice as likely to become addicted as those who wait until they are 21. Students who drink are also much more likely to commit suicide.
- **Alcohol increases** impulsive behavior and provokes teens to make stupid decisions that may lead to serious injury or death.

- **Underage drinking increases** teens' risk of physical and sexual assault.

So what can parents do?

- **Check where your teen** is going and who she'll be with. If she is going to a party, call the parents to be sure they will be in the house and that no alcohol will be served.
- **Remind your teen** *never* to get in a car with someone who has been drinking. Develop a code she can use when she calls you that means "Please come get me!"
- **Watch your teen** carefully for signs she may be depressed. Sometimes, teens use alcohol as a way to medicate themselves.

**Source:** "Underage Drinking," National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, [niasw.com/high\\_underage](http://niasw.com/high_underage).

# Avoid four traps when dealing with an underachieving teen



You know your teen could do better in school and you want to help motivate her.

When doing so, be sure to avoid these four traps:

1. **Unrealistic expectations.** There is no question that parents want the best for their children. But if you expect your teen to be the captain of the soccer team, work a part time job and still get good grades, you may be setting her up for failure.
2. **The need to control.** Some decisions, such as matters of safety, require parental control. But when it comes down to it, your teen is the one who will ultimately decide if she is going to complete her math homework.

### 3. The urge to "rescue" your teen.

If you constantly bail out your struggling teen, she will learn that it's OK to keep struggling. She will also learn that you don't think she can do better. The truth is that she will remain helpless as long as you allow her to. Once your teen knows you aren't going to step in, she will be more likely to step up and figure things out for herself.

### 4. Anger and guilt.

You already know this doesn't work. You get angry. Your teen gets angrier. And the homework doesn't get finished. So if you feel yourself losing your temper, take a break until you can approach things more calmly.

**Source:** D. Heacox, Ed.D., *Up from Underachievement: How Teachers, Students, and Parents Can Work Together to Promote Student Success, Free Spirit*.

**Q:** My ninth grader is signing up for classes for next year. He doesn't want me to be involved. He says it's "his life, his choice." Is he right?

## Questions & Answers

**A:** Parents and teens fight many battles over independence. Sometimes, teens need to win—but planning next year's schedule is not one of those times.

The choices your teen makes now will affect his future. Everything from where he will go to college (or *if* he will go to college) to the careers he might pursue can be affected by the courses he takes in high school.

While your teen may be tempted to take only the classes required for high school graduation, make sure you and your son are aware of basic college admission requirements. For example, most colleges require high school graduates to have taken four years of English, four years of math, at least three years of science, three years of social studies, two years of a foreign language and one year of the Arts.

That may not be what your son wants to hear. He may not be thinking about college at all. But in today's job market, he'd better think about his future. Most jobs require at least some training after high school. The classes he takes now will affect his options after graduation.

Call the school and schedule a meeting with your son and his guidance counselor. Together, lay out a plan for the next three years. Your teen may complain now, but he'll be glad after graduation when he has lots of great options for his future.

# It Matters: Reading

## Encourage your teen to pick up the reading habit



If your teen doesn't usually pick up books on his own, you can still help him get into the reading habit.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Start a crossword challenge.** Doing the crossword puzzle or a word puzzle online or in the newspaper is a great way to build vocabulary. Print two copies of the puzzle and race your teen to see who can complete it first.
- **Read to family members.** Ask him to read to a younger brother or sister. Or he could read to an older relative. Remind him that an older person might like the gift of reading time even more than a gift from a store.
- **Improve his game.** Sure, practice is important when it comes to sports. But reading about sports heroes could improve his game, too. He can ask the librarian to help him find biographies of the all-stars in his favorite sport.
- **Take it outside.** He can read in the backyard, on the front steps or at a park. If he's really motivated, he could find an audio book to listen to while he takes a walk or jogs.
- **Volunteer to read.** Daycare centers, libraries, hospitals and nursing homes are just a few places that may welcome volunteer readers. This might be a terrific way for your teen to complete volunteer hours.

**Source:** R. Clark, M.Ed. and others, *The School-Savvy Parent: 365 Insider Tips to Help You Help Your Child*, Free Spirit Publishing.

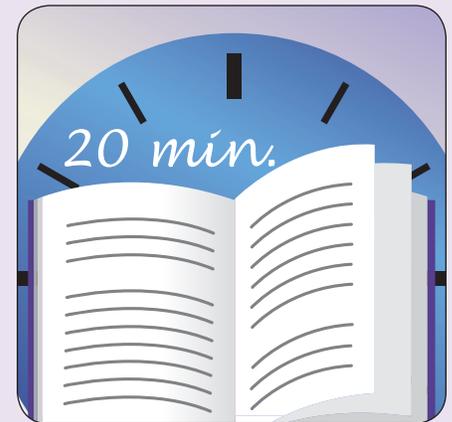
## Try a 20-minute solution to build your teen's reading skills

**B**y the time teens reach high school, they have to be strong readers. In every subject from math to science to history, they need to read long passages and understand what they've read.

The good news is that reading skills improve with practice. Teens who read a lot get better at it. They read more quickly and remember more.

So let your teen practice her reading skills by reading something she *wants* to read. Encourage her to set aside 20 minutes a day and read something not related to school.

If possible, pick up something to read yourself during the same time. Later, the two of you can talk about what you've read.



Over time, this simple solution will help your teen build her "reading muscles" and become a stronger reader.

**Source:** G. Ivey and D. Fisher, *Creating Literacy-Rich Schools for Adolescents*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

## Four steps can help your high schooler retain information



Most high schoolers have mastered the basics of reading. But remembering what they read? That can be a tougher challenge.

To help your teen retain more of what he reads, share this four-step process with him:

1. **See it.** Albert Einstein once said, "If I can't picture it, I can't understand it." Tell your teen to read a sentence or a paragraph. Then have him close his eyes and "see" the scene. As he reads, he should also try to retell what he's read in his own words.
2. **Predict.** Good readers constantly ask themselves what they think will happen next. This is one way to stay focused on what they are reading.
3. **Ask questions.** Both before and after reading, your teen should ask questions. What is the main idea? What are the differences between mammals and birds? How did the ancient Romans conquer and hold their empire?
4. **Relate it.** New learning is most likely to "stick" if it relates to other things your teen already knows. Help him find those connections.