

High School YEARS

Working Together for Lifelong Success



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).

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. 👍



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), monitor the life cycles of plants or animals (usanpn.org), or document light pollution by submitting data on constellations (globeatnight.org). Have her check out nationalgeographic.org/idea/citizen-science-projects for more ideas. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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