

High School Parents[®]

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Ask your teen to help you create new family traditions

Believe it or not, teens want to spend more time with their parents. Sure, you spend time with your teen—today you were together in the car on the way to soccer practice, and you read the newspaper while she studied for her biology test. But do you spend any quality time with your teen—time when you're relaxed and having fun together?

Now that the holidays are here, spend time with your teen by creating a new family tradition. Ask your teen to help you brainstorm ideas. Maybe you could decorate the house together or go bowling one evening.

Family traditions are important because they:

- **Build positive family memories** for your teen. She may even want to continue your tradition with her own children one day.

- **Foster a strong sense of belonging.** Traditions strengthen your relationship with your teen.
- **Instill family values.** Through spending time together, your teen knows that family is your number one priority.
- **Help your teen figure out** who she is. A close family acts as a support system while your teen is trying to determine what kind of person she wants to become.
- **Give your teen a sense of comfort.** The more comfortable your teen feels spending time having fun with you, the more likely she is to come to you for advice about serious issues.

Source: Denise Witmer, "5 Reasons to Observe Family Traditions," About.com, <http://parentingteens.about.com/od/familylife/a/familytradition.htm>.

Help your teen learn to think before acting



Your teen left the front door unlocked—again. “Don’t you ever think?” you yell. The truth is that

your teen doesn’t think—at least, he doesn’t think the same way you do. Your teen’s brain is not fully grown until he reaches his early 20s. He is still learning how to think critically and control his impulses.

Encourage your teen to think *before* he acts with this six-step decision-making process:

1. **Identify the problem.**
Ask your teen to state the problem in his own words.
2. **Think of possible solutions.**
Don’t judge whether the ideas are realistic or not—just keep brainstorming.
3. **Think of all the good and bad points of each solution.** Your teen might even think of other solutions that are better than any he has listed so far.
4. **Make the decision.** Now, your teen has a solution to try.
5. **Act on the decision.**
6. **Evaluate.** How did your teen’s solution work? What changes, if any, should he make the next time he has to deal with this problem?

Encourage your high schooler to develop a strong work ethic



Jobs are becoming more difficult to find for today's teens. More adults are beginning to take over jobs traditionally staffed by teens. And many employers are saying that teens aren't as "employable" as they used to be. They're finding that many teens act as if the work is beneath them, do the bare minimum or are simply not responsible enough.

But studies show that jobs have many benefits for teens. Teens learn vital life skills, build a foundation for their future careers and improve their self-esteem.

So how can you give your teen a leg up over the competition? Talk to your teen about the importance of a strong work ethic. A "work ethic" is a set of values and beliefs that includes traits such as being reliable, working hard and having pride in your work. To encourage a strong work ethic in your teen:

- **Model a strong work ethic.** If you show your teen how to work, why work is important and that every job has value, he will be well prepared. Share some of your own work experiences to make the point that a job done well can have many benefits.
- **Give your teen responsibilities.** He should do his chores because that's what he was asked to do—not just to escape being yelled at for slacking.

Source: Jan Swander, "The Decline of the Teen Workforce," Oregon Employment Department, www.qualityinfo.org/olmisj/ArticleReader?itemid=00005966.

"Don't demand respect as a parent. Demand civility and insist on honesty. But respect is something you must earn—with kids as well as with adults."

—William Attwood

Set limits on text messaging to help your teen get enough sleep



Teens who are already tired from their busy schedules may be adding to their problems of sleep deprivation. A growing number of teens admit they are sending text messages when their parents think they're asleep.

That means they are tired in the morning. Over time, these texting teens lose more sleep. That affects their attendance, their grades and possibly even their health. Here are ways to set limits on texting:

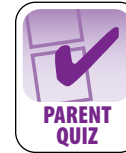
- **Look at your bill.** Check when messages were sent. If your teen is

a heavy texter after bedtime, set limits. If the problem continues, take away the phone for a time.

- **Keep the phone out of the bedroom.** Plug it into a recharger in the kitchen or family room.
- **Let her experience the consequences.** If she stays up all night sending messages to her friends, don't take the responsibility of getting her up and out the door in the morning.

Source: Stephanie Dunnewind, "Social Impact: Teens Text Messaging Friends Into Wee Hours," *The Seattle Times*, www.govtech.com/gt/118753.

Can you help your shy teen become more confident?



Nearly everyone has felt shy at one time or another. But some teens seem to be shy in *any* new situation. They find it hard to make friends. They don't get invited to parties. They are afraid to speak up in class.

Are you doing all you can to help your shy teen? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you take time** to show your teen that you love him?
- ___ **2. Do you help your teen think** about joining school activities? Some solo sports, such as distance running, are excellent for shy teens.
- ___ **3. Have you helped your teen find** volunteer activities? Teens who help others feel good about themselves.
- ___ **4. Do you help your teen role-play** challenging situations? Practice can help a teen build confidence.
- ___ **5. Will you talk** with his teachers if shyness causes problems at school?

How well are you doing?

Each *yes* means you're helping your shy teen gain confidence and social skills. For *no* answers, try those ideas in the quiz.

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Five things your college-bound senior should do this month



Managing college applications is a big job. It's important to allow your child to take on this responsibility. That said,

there are ways to help. Here are five things college-bound seniors should be doing this month:

1. Narrow down the college list.

Applying to college can be expensive. Have your teen work with her counselor to choose between five and 10 schools. Be sure a few of them are “safety” schools—schools where she has a very good chance of admission. Also include a few “stretch” schools—those that will be more of a challenge.

2. **Set up a master calendar.** On it, write the date when each admission is due. Note the dates for college testing.

3. **Start taking action** on financial aid. Especially in this economy, a financial aid offer can make the difference in whether a teen can attend a favorite school. Have her get a financial aid application for every college where she applies.
4. **Ask for recommendations.** Most schools want one from a teacher and one from a counselor. Have your teen prepare a short résumé of the things she has done to make their job easier.
5. **Write and rewrite** the college essay. It's important to spend time making it her best. A college essay written at two a.m. on the night before the deadline is unlikely to get your teen into her preferred school.

Source: College Board, “Pulling Your Applications Together,” www.collegeboard.com/student/plan/action/seniors.html.

Make sure your teen slows down to proofread more thoroughly



Your teen spent last week researching and writing a big paper. He checked books out of the library and took careful notes.

He didn't even have to pull an all-nighter to finish it—impressive, right? Not if he printed it and rushed out the door without a second look.

Computers have come a long way in helping teens with their spelling and grammar—but spell check isn't perfect. If your teen types “ours” instead of “hours,” the computer won't notice anything is wrong ... but your teen's teacher will.

To avoid careless errors, encourage your teen to:

- **Slow down.** By slowing down when reading over a paper, your

teen is more likely to catch errors. Our eyes tend to fill in missing letters or words. He may also want to read aloud—sometimes the ear will catch what the eye skips over.

- **Proofread more than once.** Some people even read a paper from back to front so spelling errors are more likely to jump out.
- **Get to know the kind of errors** he makes. If he always forgets to number his pages, that should be something he double checks.
- **Stay positive** even if he finds mistakes. Remember that magazines and newspapers have many editors to proofread their copy, and they still make mistakes!

Source: “Proofreading,” Virginia Tech Study Skills, www.ucc.vt.edu/stdysk/proofing.html.

Q: My tenth-grade daughter has always done anything to get her own way. Even in grade school, I often gave in rather than deal with her tantrums. But now she's totally rebellious. She refuses to do anything I ask. She calls me names. She acts the same way at school and the teachers are as frustrated as I am. How can we help this child get back in control?

Questions & Answers

A: All teens go through periods of rebelling against authority. But your daughter has moved beyond what's acceptable—at home and at school.

And while dealing with her defiance will be tough, deal with it you must. Otherwise, she'll never be able to hold a job, have a healthy relationship or live with others.

Here's what to do:

- **Meet with her teachers.** You all need to be on the same page—and you'll need to present a united front.
- **Set up some basic expectations.** Choose your battles, but do focus on things like speaking respectfully to others.
- **Let her know** that there will be consequences for her actions. The consequences should be roughly proportional to what she's done. (Taking the car without permission is not the same as calling someone a name.)
- **Enforce consequences** when she tests the limits. Stay calm and remember that she needs a parent, not a friend.
- **Look for help** for your daughter and for yourself. A friendly boss, a Big Sister, a mentor or a coach can all help you both navigate this troubling time.

—Kristen Amundson,
The Parent Institute

It Matters: Homework

Have your teen make a study plan before tests



Whether she has two months until she takes her college entrance tests or four days until her math quiz, your teen needs a study plan. It's a way to help her organize her time and her studying so she covers everything she needs to review.

Here are the steps to follow:

- 1. Learn about the exam.** The more details your teen has, the better her preparation will be. Is it all multiple-choice? Will she need to write an essay? What will be covered?
- 2. Figure out what she knows and what she needs to learn.** If possible, have her take a practice exam for any major test. (Sample college entrance tests are available online.) That will help her guide her study time. Seeing that she already knows some of what's on the test will also give her confidence to focus on the rest.
- 3. Break the study tasks into smaller chunks.** Studying a shorter amount each day works better than cramming everything in the night before. Writing down her plan will help your high schooler make sure she covers everything she needs to learn before the exam.
- 4. Set a schedule.** Get out a calendar and create a study schedule. She should post it over her desk so she can see it.

Source: Lee Wherry Brainerd and Ricki Winegardner, *10 Secrets to Acing Any High School Test*, ISBN: 1-576-85437-X (Learning Express, www.LearnATest.com).

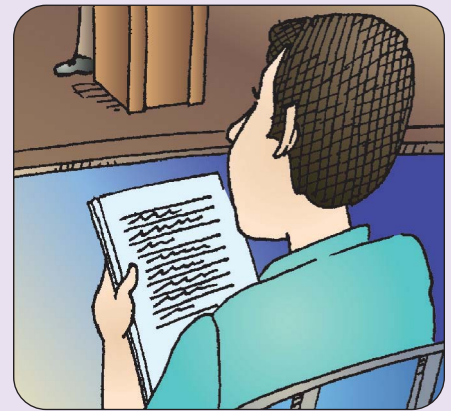
Does your high schooler know how to take good class notes?

Many high school teachers present information in a class lecture. But if students don't know how to take good notes, they may not remember the important facts until they are expected to provide them on a test.

Basically, listening to a lecture is like "reading with your ears." Some of the same techniques that help your teen remember what he reads can be adapted to help him take good notes during a lecture.

Teens who learn best by seeing need to make the lecture visible on the page. They may draw pictures (not doodles of the girl in the next row). Or use different colored markers to highlight important topics.

Some teens learn best by hearing. For them, it's important to focus on what the teacher is saying. They jot down key words or points.

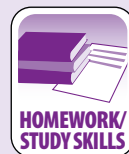


After the lecture, they write down as much information as possible.

Many teens draw a line down their page, leaving a blank column on the left. They take notes in the right column. Then later, they go back and write key points in the left column.

Source: Gail Wood, *How to Study*, ISBN: 157-68530-8-X (Learning Express, www.LearnATest.com).

Better organization leads to better grades for your teen



By being organized, your teen will always be prepared for class. To help your teen stay organized for school, encourage him to:

- **Use a daily planner.** Before leaving each class, your teen should write down exactly what he needs to have/do/study for tomorrow. By the end of last period, he'll have a written record of the entire day.
- **Keep subjects separate.** He shouldn't stuff six batches of

handouts into one huge binder. Instead, he should use a different folder for each class. That way, his work will automatically be divided by subject.

- **Use an assignment calendar.** Your teen should keep a calendar in his room and track every upcoming test and project on it. If the assignment is weeks away, he can jot down reminders. Encourage your teen to keep his calendar updated and to look at it every day.