

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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LEAKE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

*still make the difference!*



## Time management skills are vital to high school success

**M**any students struggle with time management. And the challenge gets even greater as teens advance through the grades and have more complicated schedules.

To help your teen organize and manage his time, encourage him to:

- **Create a master schedule.** Having all of his responsibilities and activities listed in one place will give your teen a better look at how much time he actually has.
- **Prioritize.** Your teen should review the calendar to see if there are activities he doesn't have time for. Remind him that homework must always come first and he needs to allow time for it in his schedule every day. So if he already has soccer practice three days a week, he may need to adjust his part-time job schedule.
- **Create a weekly schedule.** At the start of the week, your teen should transfer items from his calendar to a weekly planner. Seeing everything he needs to accomplish for the week will help him stay on track.
- **Plan each day.** Help your teen get into the habit of making a daily to-do list. He should also prioritize his homework. If he has no homework, he should use the time to read, review or get started on an upcoming assignment.
- **Take advantage of technology.** Electronic calendars are great tools to help your teen manage his time and keep him informed on the go. Suggest he set up reminders to alert him a few days before an assignment is due or a few minutes before his study time is scheduled to begin.

## Is your teen at risk of dropping out of school?



Are you aware of the different factors that contribute to dropping out? Here are three warning

signs of trouble:

1. **Absences.** Students who miss more than five days in a marking period often fall behind in their classwork. They feel frustrated and sometimes decide to give up.
2. **Poor grades** in core subjects. If your teen is failing in math, science, English or social studies, she may have to repeat a grade. Teens who are held back often drop out rather than finish high school.
3. **Lack of engagement** in class, often with behavioral problems. Teens who never seem to have homework, or who are in constant trouble, may end up dropping out.

If you recognize any of these warning signs in your teen, contact the school right away. Make a plan to help get your teen back on track to graduate.

**Source:** M.R. Dianda, Ed.D, *Preventing Future High School Dropouts*, National Education Association, [nismc.com/high\\_dropouts](http://nismc.com/high_dropouts).

## Taking healthy risks can benefit high schoolers academically



You may think that “taking a risk” is a scary thing. However, some risk-taking can actually be a positive activity for high school students.

When parents encourage their teens to take on healthy challenges, they reduce the likelihood that they will take negative risks—and increase their chances for success in school.

There are three types of positive risks you should encourage your teen to take:

- 1. School risks.** Your teen could sign up for a challenging course. She could try out for an athletic team or for the class play. She could run for class president.
- 2. Life risks.** Your teen could introduce herself to someone new at school or sit with a different group of students during

lunch. She could take on a physical challenge, such as training for a 5K. Or she could sign up for lessons to try something new, such as painting.

- 3. Community risks.** Your teen could organize a volunteer effort, apply for a part-time job or start her own business.

**Source:** “Help Your Teen Focus on Healthy Risks,” Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, [niswc.com/high\\_risks](http://niswc.com/high_risks).

**“The biggest risk is not taking any risk. In a world that is changing really quickly, the only strategy that is guaranteed to fail is not taking risks.”**

—Mark Zuckerberg

## Experts say teen brains may be wired for power struggles



You are determined that your teen will finish his homework right now. He is equally determined to spend another 30 minutes on his phone.

Sound familiar? Teens and parents regularly find themselves locked in power struggles. Brain research suggests that these power struggles may actually be due to the fact that teens’ brains are not fully developed.

An area of the brain known as the prefrontal cortex acts as the brain’s CEO. It helps adults regulate their behavior.

An adult would think, “If I say that to my boss, I’m likely to get

fired. Maybe I’d better keep that thought to myself.” But the prefrontal cortex develops late—so most teens lack that ability to regulate their behavior.

So what does that mean for you and your teen? Avoid power struggles when you can. Don’t give in to all of your teen’s demands, of course. Instead, look for ways to involve him in decisions. For example, asking, “When can you finish your homework so we can go to Grandma’s tonight?” may eliminate a fight—and still get the homework finished.

**Source:** *The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction*, The National Institute of Mental Health, [niswc.com/high\\_teenbrain](http://niswc.com/high_teenbrain).

## Are you helping your teen avoid ‘senior slump’?



Ask any teacher and you’ll learn that “senior slump” affects many seniors. They don’t want to study. They don’t want to come to class on time. In fact, many don’t want to come to class at all!

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out if you are helping your teen avoid senior slump:

- 1. Have you talked** with your teen about why she should keep her grades up? Colleges can (and do) take back their offers of admission!
- 2. Are you making sure** your teen’s attendance doesn’t slip?
- 3. Have you planned** some fun senior activities with other parents that will give your teen a reason to want to stay active in school?
- 4. Are you giving** your teen a chance to have adult experiences—interning in an office, volunteering?
- 5. Are you trying** to relax and enjoy your teen? In a few months, she may not be living with you.

**How well are you doing?**

More *yes* answers mean you are helping your teen stay focused her senior year. For each *no* answer, try that idea.

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## Share six simple editing tips to improve your teen's writing



Your teen is expected to do a lot of writing in high school. Remind him that before he turns in a paper or answers an essay question, he should review it.

Share these six editing tips with your teen:

- 1. Track with your finger.** Have your teen proofread slowly, word by word, to check for mistakes. One careless error can negatively affect his grade.
- 2. Check capital letters.** Make sure they are used at the beginning of each sentence. Capitals should also be used for proper names and at the beginning of some quotations.
- 3. Correct spelling.** Many English words sound alike. Teens some-

times may still confuse words like *there* and *their* and spell-check won't catch the error.

- 4. Add pizzazz.** All writing needs a little oomph. Have him use interesting details or a unique point of view to make the writing his own.
- 5. Proofread punctuation.** Do sentences end with a period or question mark? Are commas used correctly? Check for proper use of apostrophes. (Pay attention to the difference between *its* and *it's*. The latter means "it is.")
- 6. Add support.** Does the essay include interesting examples? Is there support for the main idea?

**Source:** K. Donohue, *180 Days to Successful Writers*, Corwin Press.

## Combat common attendance excuses from your teenager



You've heard them all—every excuse in the book for why your teen should be allowed to stay home. She's even invented some new ones that weren't around back when you were trying to pull one over on your parents.

Here is a list of some common excuses teens use to get out of going to school—and ways to combat them:

- **"I don't feel good."** This excuse has been around for as long as, well, school itself. Unless she can describe her symptoms exactly or she has a fever, send her to school.
- **"If I could just sleep for an extra hour, I'd be so much more productive."** Respond that if she skips TV time tonight, she can go to bed an hour earlier.

- **"I have a project due at 2 p.m. that I haven't finished."** Let her know that she needs to be more organized. She isn't allowed to skip her classes just to finish assignments for another one.
- **"I need to rest before the big game tonight."** School comes before sports and other extracurricular activities. Big events are no exception.
- **"Juniors aren't supposed to go to school today. I forgot to tell you."** If this could be possible, call the school to make sure.

If your teen is constantly trying to stay home from school, it may be the sign of a larger problem. Speak to your teen's teachers or guidance counselor if you are worried about her reluctance to attend school.

**Q:** I have a son in high school and I am wondering how much monitoring I should do when it comes to his activities. Should I track his location using his phone? Should I read his text messages?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** There are many tools available to parents these days to help them monitor teens. But there's something important to remember—and that's the fine line between keeping your teen safe and spying on him.

You can respect your teen's privacy and keep him safe at the same time. To make sure he steers clear of trouble:

- **Build a parent network.** Get to know the parents of your teen's friends. Before he goes to a party, make sure an adult will be present and that no alcohol will be served.
- **Set rules about using the car—and about riding in cars.** Make sure your teen knows he should never get in the car with someone who has been drinking. Tell him he can call you to come get him, with no questions asked.
- **Monitor what your teen posts on social media.** Let him know if you don't like what you see. And if he doesn't want you to see what he posts, then he shouldn't be posting it!
- **Talk with your teen.** This is the best way to keep track of him. Spend time alone with him—go out for ice cream, take a walk or do something else you both enjoy. One-on-one talks will help you build a strong relationship. And that will work far better than spying on him!

# It Matters: Test Success

## Boost success with a five-day study program



Teens need to study for all kinds of tests, from history chapter tests to algebra final exams. Share this five-day

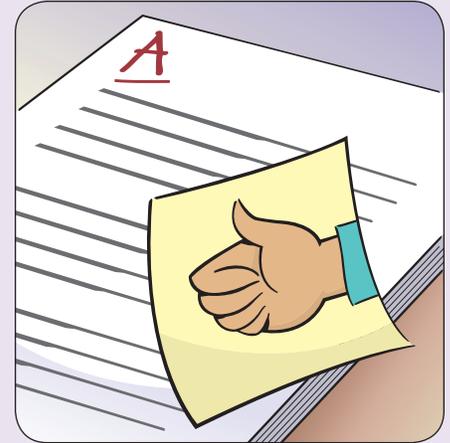
study program with your teen:

- **Four days before the test**, gather everything that will be covered on the test. This includes class notes, outlines, quizzes and handouts. Arrange them by date.
- **Three days before the test**, read everything over. Make a list of questions you think may be on the test. Did the teacher spend four days on the defeat of the Spanish Armada? Odds are, that will show up on test day. If you have a list of facts to memorize, make flash cards or create a quiz so you can practice recalling the information. (Visit [quizlet.com](http://quizlet.com) for free online study tools.)
- **Two days before the test**, look at the textbook. What are the major titles? What are the most important topics? List more questions that may show up on the test. Now, choose several of these possible test questions and make notes of how you would answer them.
- **One day before the test**, quiz yourself. If you have facts to memorize, see if you can write them correctly. If you have to apply a formula, see if you can do it.
- **The day of the test**, try to repeat what you did the day before. If you are allowed to bring notes into the test, make sure you have everything you need.

## Share helpful test-taking strategies with your teen

Your teen is in a panic because of a big test tomorrow. Although she knows the material, she doesn't always test well. To help your teen do her best on a test, encourage her to:

- **Read over the test** before starting, and note each question's point value.
- **Write it all down.** She should put the facts and formulas she's memorized down on paper. She should also make notes for essays.
- **Read the directions carefully.**
- **Budget her time.** Your teen shouldn't spend half her time on an essay question if it counts for only 10 percent of the test score.
- **Answer easy questions first.** This builds confidence. While she answers the easy questions, her mind will start thinking about answers to the harder ones.



- **Circle key words** in difficult questions. This will help your teen focus on important points.
- **Use all the time.** If she finishes early, your teen should cover up her answers and rework some questions. She should also check her answer sheet. Did she enter the answer to question 41 on line 41?

## Show your high schooler how to prepare physically for tests



Your teen has studied for days leading up to a big test—but he's not truly ready until he also prepares physically. How can he do that?

Your teen should:

- **Get plenty of sleep.** Brains work best when they are well-rested. Make sure your teen gets at least eight hours of sleep the night before a test.
- **Set an alarm clock.** He can set a backup alarm, too, if he's concerned he may oversleep.
- **Dress comfortably.** Sometimes, classrooms are too hot or too cold, so he should dress in layers.
- **Eat breakfast.** Food fuels his body and his mind, giving him energy and helping him focus. Your teen should avoid a big meal however, which could make him groggy.
- **Show up early.** He should allow himself at least five minutes before the test begins to get settled—get out his pen, pencil, calculator, etc. and take a few deep breaths.