

High School Parents

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still make the difference!



Encourage your teenager to develop a strong work ethic

The job market is becoming tougher for today's teens as more adults are beginning to take jobs traditionally filled by teens. And many managers say that teens aren't as "employable" as they used to be. They say many teens act as if the work is beneath them, do the bare minimum or are simply not responsible enough. Simply put: Many teens lack a strong work ethic.

A *work ethic* is a set of values and beliefs that includes traits such as reliability, dedication and pride in one's work. Having a strong work ethic is not only necessary for success in the workforce—it is necessary for success in school, too.

To encourage a strong work ethic in your teen:

- **Be a role model.** Have a positive attitude about work and show your teen that you take your job and your responsibilities seriously.
- **Give your teen responsibilities.** She should do her chores because that's what she's expected to do. And she should take responsibility for her actions. If she misses a deadline for a project, don't write an excuse to the teacher. It's your teen's job to talk with the teacher to reach a solution.
- **Reinforce delayed gratification.** Remind your teen that she should work first and then play. Encourage her to finish the first draft of her paper *before* she heads to the mall.

Source: J. Swander, "The Decline of the Teen Workforce," Oregon Employment Department, niscw.com/work_ethic.

Teens can make better decisions in just six steps



Did you know that your teen's brain is not fully developed until he reaches his early 20s? That means he is still learning how to think critically and control his impulses—which can make decision-making quite a tricky process!

Help your teen learn to think *before* he acts by having him follow these six steps:

1. **Identify the problem.**
Your teen should state the problem in his own words.
2. **Think of possible solutions.**
He shouldn't stop to judge whether the ideas are realistic or not—just keep thinking.
3. **List the positive and negative outcomes for each solution.**
Your teen might even think of other solutions that are better than any he has listed so far.
4. **Make the decision.**
5. **Act on the decision.**
6. **Evaluate.** How did his solution work? What changes, if any, should he make the next time he has to deal with this problem?

Value honesty in your family & expect your teen to tell the truth



The statistics about teens and honesty are scary. Ninety-eight percent of teens who believe honesty is the best policy still

lie. Eighty-four percent believe they need to use deception to get ahead in the world. And 80% of high schoolers surveyed admitted to cheating.

But this doesn't mean your teen has to follow the pack! To promote honesty as a family value:

- **Expect it.** Tell your teen that you expect honesty. Make statements like "In this family, we always tell the truth."
- **Make it easy.** Your teen needs to feel comfortable telling you the truth. If you are too harsh, your teen may begin lying to you or may just stop talking to you altogether. Strive for the middle ground: "I'm disappointed in you,

but I appreciate your being honest with me."

- **Model it.** Don't let your teen stay home from school "sick" when she wants to miss a test. Don't ask your teen to answer the phone and say you're not home because you don't want to speak to the caller. Research shows that kids develop lying habits mostly from copying their parents!
- **Reinforce it.** Praise your teen when she is honest and admits mistakes.

Source: T. Walker, "What Can Be Done About Student Cheating?" National Education Association, niscw.com/cheat.

"If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything."

—Mark Twain

Studies show it's important for teens to get enough sleep



Sleepy students have trouble learning, are less likely to join sports teams and are more likely to feel depressed.

Research shows it's just as important to get a good night's rest after a day of learning as it is the night before a test—learning continues to take place while you sleep!

But the sleepest students—teens—often have trouble getting enough sleep. Their natural rhythm is to sleep late and stay up later—the exact opposite of the typical high school day.

That doesn't mean your tired teen is doomed to yawning until he's thirty. Here's what you can do to reset that clock and help your teen wake up ready to learn:

- **Encourage him to stick to a bedtime routine.** Experts say dimming the lights at night and avoiding bright screens right before bed can make it easier to fall asleep.
- **Don't let him sleep all weekend.** Your teen shouldn't sleep more than two hours past his normal wake-up time. His body will be too confused when he has to wake up early again on Monday.
- **Suggest exercise.** Sports, running and other activities—at least a few hours before bedtime—will help your teen sleep soundly.

Source: S. Spinks, "Adolescents and Sleep," PBS, www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/from/sleep.html.

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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What your college-bound senior should be doing this month!



Managing college applications is a big job. It's important to allow your teen to take on this responsibility. That said, there are ways to help.

Here are things college-bound seniors should be doing this month:

- **Finalize the college list.** Applying to college can be expensive. Have your teen work with his counselor to choose around five schools. **Be sure a few of them are "safety" schools**—schools where he has a very good chance of admission. Also include a few "stretch" schools—those that will be more of a challenge.
- **Set up a master calendar.** On it, your teen should write the date when each application is due. Note the dates for college testing.

- **Start applying for financial aid.** Go to fafsa.ed.gov to learn more about FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). Have him get a financial aid application for every college where he applies.
- **Ask for recommendations.** Most schools want at least one from a teacher and one from a counselor. Have your teen prepare a short résumé of the things he has done to make their job easier.
- **Write and rewrite college essays.** It's important for your teen to spend time doing his best work. A college essay written at two a.m. on the night before the deadline is unlikely to get your teen into his preferred school.

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

Research highlights five key tasks for parents of teenagers



There's no question—being the parent of a teen can be hard work! But according to researchers at the Harvard School of

Public Health, there are five key tasks for parents:

1. **Love and connect.** Teens feel like everything in their world is changing, from their bodies to their friends to their school. Your love and support should provide your teen with a firm foundation.
2. **Monitor and observe.** Stay aware of what your teen is doing, and with whom. Just as importantly, be sure she knows you're tuned in!
3. **Guide and limit.** If there is a single message for parents, it might be this: Loosen up, but don't let go.

Teens still need limits, and you're the one to provide them.

4. **Model and consult.** Show your teen what a loving parent, a responsible citizen and a good neighbor does. Answer her questions in ways that are truthful, but acknowledge her level of maturity.
5. **Provide and advocate.** Teens need a network of supportive adults. So work with other parents to provide the opportunities teens need to thrive. If your teen needs preventive care or treatment—for medical or mental health issues—be a strong advocate.

Source: A. R. Simpson, *Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action*, Harvard School of Public Health, http://hrweb.mit.edu/worklife/raising-teens/pdfs/raising_teens_report.pdf.

Q: My tenth-grade daughter has always gotten her own way. Even in grade school, her tantrums were so bad I gave in. 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, you have to deal with it. 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 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.

It Matters: Homework

Slow 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-checkers aren't perfect. If your teen types *ours* instead of *hours*, the computer won't notice anything is wrong ... but his 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 should also try reading it 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 stand 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, magazines and newspapers have many editors to proofread their copy, and they still make mistakes!

Source: "Proofreading," Virginia Tech Study Skills.

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.

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 might draw pictures or use different colored markers to highlight the 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: G. Wood, *How to Study*, Learning Express.

Seven-step plan makes writing research papers easier for teens



You can't write your teen's research papers for her, but you can help her by sharing this seven-step plan:

1. **Write a thesis statement.** Your teen should boil down everything she wants to say into a single sentence. It should state the position she is taking in her paper.
2. **Make an outline.** Your teen should include all the main points she plans to cover.
3. **Write the rough draft.**
4. **Include sources.** The purpose of a research paper is to show the research your teen has done. As she writes, she needs to state where she got her facts.
5. **Read the paper out loud.** This can help your teen "hear" if something doesn't make sense.
6. **Revise and rewrite.** The paper may take several drafts.
7. **Proofread.** Don't let your teen overlook the importance of carefully reading over her final draft.