

High School Parents[®]

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Gadsden City Schools

still make the difference!



Time management strategies keep high schoolers on track

Time management is a common hurdle for many students. And the challenge gets even greater as teens advance through the grades and have more complicated schedules.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Create a master schedule.** Having all responsibilities and activities listed in one place will give your teen a better understanding of how much time is available.
- **Prioritize.** Your teen should review the calendar often to see if there are activities that conflict or don't allow time for schoolwork and studying every day. If band practice is three days a week, your teen may need to adjust a part-time job schedule.
- **Create a weekly schedule.** At the start of the week, your teen should

transfer items from the calendar to a weekly planner. Seeing what needs to be accomplished for the week will help your student stay on track.

- **Plan each day.** Help your teen get into the habit of making daily to-do lists that prioritize schoolwork. If there are no assignments to complete or studying to do, your teen should use the time to read, review or get started on an upcoming assignment.
- **Take advantage of technology.** Digital calendars are great tools to help students manage time and keep them informed on the go. Suggest that your teen set up reminders a few days before an assignment is due or five minutes before study time is scheduled to begin.

Link learning to real-life situations



One of the best ways to support what students are learning in school is to link classroom

concepts to real-life activities.

Talk about the classes your teen is taking, and look for activities that relate to the concepts.

To make a connection with:

- **Math,** ask your teen to help you create a monthly budget. Or, ask your teen to estimate how much a full, half or quarter tank of gas will cost.
- **History,** visit a local museum or monument. Or, suggest interviewing someone who lived through related events.
- **A foreign language,** watch a movie or read a children's book in that language together. Or, challenge your teen to translate a favorite poem or quotation.
- **Science,** ask your teen to brainstorm ways technology could solve a common household problem.
- **Art,** visit a local art gallery or exhibit and discuss the different styles and techniques. Or, encourage your teen to try a new art form, like photography or sculpting.

Reduce your teen's stress to boost attendance and learning



Research has found that teens who experience stressful events at home often have attendance problems and difficulty learning at school for up to two days following the event.

One study found that sources of stress for teens include:

- **Conflict with parents.**
- **Family demands.**
- **Problems with homework.**
- **Time management issues.**

It makes sense: When students are distracted in class because they are thinking about something that happened at home the night before, they can't pay attention—and are less likely to learn.

When your teen is experiencing stress, offer these tips:

- **Take a deep breath.** Taking the time to stop and think about the

issue at hand may help your teen see a solution to the problem.

- **Exercise.** Twenty to 30 minutes of exercise can relieve tension and clear your teen's head. Suggest that your teen go on a run or try some stretching.
- **Keep a journal.** Some teens find it easier to write down their feelings than to talk about them. This is a great way to relieve stress—and your teen will be strengthening writing skills at the same time.

Source: J. Warner, "Teen Stress at Home Lingers in School," WebMD Health News.

"Adopting the right attitude can convert a negative stress into a positive one."

—Hans Selye

Community college is a practical option for many undergraduates



According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), community colleges enroll close to

40% percent of all undergraduates in the United States. That's more than six million students!

Students choose community colleges for many reasons, such as:

- **A need to work** and go to school at the same time. Community colleges offer flexible schedules of classes.
- **The cost.** Typically, the cost of tuition and fees at a two-year community college is less than half the cost of a four-year college.
- **A shorter route to employment.** Many jobs do not require a four-year

degree. Programs in many technical fields offer students a two-year certificate and quick entry into work.

To find out if community college could be a good fit, encourage your teen to schedule a meeting with a college counselor and ask about:

- **The courses** and programs the school offers, including dual-enrollment for high school students.
- **The cost** to complete a program, including tuition, fees and other expenses. Is financial aid available? Do they have a work-study program?
- **Options for transferring** to a four-year university. Is there an established path? What credits would transfer?

Are you helping your high schooler concentrate?



Maintaining concentration can be challenging for high school students. Are you helping your teen stay focused?

Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below to find out:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your teen to participate in enjoyable focus-building activities? For some teens, this might be reading; for others, it could be sports or chess club.
- ___ **2. Do you set limits** on recreational screen use? Extended time in front of fast-paced media can reduce your teen's concentration.
- ___ **3. Do you encourage** your teen to finish tasks and offer praise for doing so?
- ___ **4. Do you discourage** multitasking? It's difficult to concentrate on assignments if your teen is also watching Netflix and texting friends.
- ___ **5. Do you minimize** interruptions when your teen is working?

How well are you doing?

Mostly *yes* answers mean you are helping your teen maintain solid concentration. Mostly *no* answers? Check the quiz for some suggestions.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.

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Give your teen six strategies for taking better class notes



Have you ever wondered why some kids seem to ace every test and understand everything in class, while others struggle? There are many possible reasons, but one factor is simple: note-taking!

When students take notes, they're not just writing things down; they're actively listening and thinking about what the teacher is saying. This makes it easier for them to remember important information and do well in school.

Share these note-taking tips:

- 1. Listen for the main ideas.** Anything the teacher repeats more than once or writes on the board should go into your teen's notes. Your teen should also write down any words that the teacher defines.
- 2. Keep it brief.** Your teen should use phrases and words instead of complete sentences. Recommend creating a system of abbreviations and symbols. Suggest your teen keep a list of them.
- 3. Leave some blank spaces.** This allows your teen to add comments or questions later.
- 4. Place a mark** next to unfamiliar vocabulary or concepts. This reminds your teen to look them up later.
- 5. Use colors and shapes.** Your teen can draw a circle or box around the most important idea. Some students find it helpful to use colored markers to show how ideas relate.
- 6. Review the notes** each evening. Your teen will be better able to fix any mistakes and fill in something missed. Daily review will also help your teen remember the information at test time.

High school students still need quality time with their families



Before teenagers can drive, they spend a lot of time with their families. They need rides to see friends, go to practices and other activities.

But once teens can drive, or have friends who can drive them around, they often spend less time with their families. And they need their family's approval, attention and guidance more than ever.

Quality time with you boosts your teen's confidence, reduces risky behavior and promotes school success. To enrich your time together:

- **Talk to your teen about school.** Show interest in classes and ask questions. Ask your teen to teach you something from a class.
- **Plan a family meal together.** Divide responsibilities. You'll get a yummy meal and a great conversation.
- **Read together.** Choose a book that you'll both enjoy reading and set aside time to discuss it.
- **Work on a project.** Does a room or closet need organizing? With your teen, brainstorm a plan of attack.
- **Ask your teen** to help you plan a family outing. Teens like to give their input and are more invested in activities that they help plan.
- **Exercise together.** Go for a walk, ride bikes or shoot some hoops. You'll get fresh air and time to talk.
- **Schedule a family game night.** Let your teen invite a friend over to participate. As a bonus, you'll get to know the friend a bit better!

Q: My teen is a junior in high school and can't seem to make a decision about anything! How can I help my teen learn how to make responsible decisions?

Questions & Answers

A: As kids grow up, they will be required to make all sorts of decisions—some big and some small. Decision-making is challenging for most teens. But for some, it can lead to almost total paralysis.

To build your teen's skills:

- **Offer plenty of opportunities** to make low-risk decisions. Suppose your teen is responsible for planning and preparing dinner for the family each week. On Monday, say, "You're in charge of dinner one night this week. You decide which night you want to cook and what you'll make." Don't mention it during the week. Simply let your teen decide when to handle the task.
- **Share helpful strategies.** When your teen has to make a decision, suggest making a list of the positives and negatives for each option. Sometimes, seeing things written down can make the choice easier.
- **Remind your teen** that mistakes are opportunities to learn. Some teens are afraid to make a decision because they are worried about making the wrong one. Let your teen know that in life, things don't always work out the way we plan. People learn something from every choice they make, even if it's simply what *not to do* next time.
- **Suggest that your teen** set deadlines for big decisions. "You have until Tuesday to decide if you want to accept Mr. Smith's job offer."

It Matters: Reading

Help your teen establish a solid reading habit



Sometimes teens need a little nudge to discover the joy of reading. The good news is there are plenty of creative and

engaging ways to encourage reading. Suggest that your teen:

1. **Join you in a puzzle race.** Doing the crossword puzzle or a word puzzle online or in the newspaper is a fun way to build vocabulary. Print out two copies of the puzzle and race your teen to see who can complete it first.
2. **Read to family members.** Ask your student to read to a younger sibling or an older relative. Remind your teen that an older person might enjoy being read to even more than a gift from a store.
3. **Read about sports.** Sure, practice is important when it comes to sports. However, reading about sports heroes could improve your teen's game, too. Your teen can ask the librarian for help finding biographies of all-stars in a favorite sport.
4. **Take it outside.** Your teen can read in the backyard or at a park. Or, your student could download an audiobook to listen to while going for a run.
5. **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.

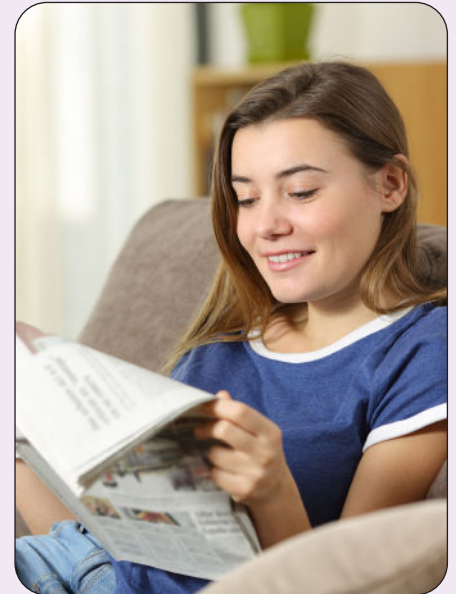
Reading & discussing the news build's teens' thinking skills

News articles often appeal to teens more than books because they are much shorter—which makes your teen less likely to protest about not having enough time to read them.

Scroll through recent news articles in a printed or online newspaper and select at least one your teen might find interesting. After reading it yourself, share the article and ask your teen to read it and give an opinion about it. Did your teen learn anything?

Then, to sharpen thinking skills, encourage your teen to read editorials—articles that offer an author's opinion on a topical issue.

Every day for a week, have your student pick an editorial for you both to read. At the end of each day, discuss what you've read. Do you and your teen agree or disagree with the points made? If you could tell the author one thing, what would it be?



Reading the news every day, even just an article or two, is one of the most valuable habits your high schooler can develop to enhance reading and analytical thinking skills!

Increase pleasure reading by helping your teen set goals



As students progress through high school, the amount of reading they do for pleasure steadily drops. This

trend is concerning because reading is a skill that improves with practice. Students who read for enjoyment often demonstrate stronger reading comprehension abilities, increased reading speed and overall better academic performance.

If your teen has fallen out of the habit of reading for enjoyment, encourage setting a reading goal for

the rest of the school year. The goal could be measured by the number of minutes spent reading, the number of pages completed or the total number of books read. With your teen, decide on a reward for achieving the goal.

If your high schooler doesn't know what to read, explore online resources such as Goodreads. Or, suggest your teen ask friends, teachers or a librarian for recommendations. Even just browsing your local public libraries can lead to exciting finds.

Source: "Federal Data on Reading for Pleasure: All Signs Show a Slump," National Endowment of the Arts.