

Family Guides to Support Learning

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Parents and caregivers want their teens to succeed in school – to be engaged and excited about learning; to build strong relationships with their teachers and peers; and to learn each year the knowledge and skills they need to be successful academically.

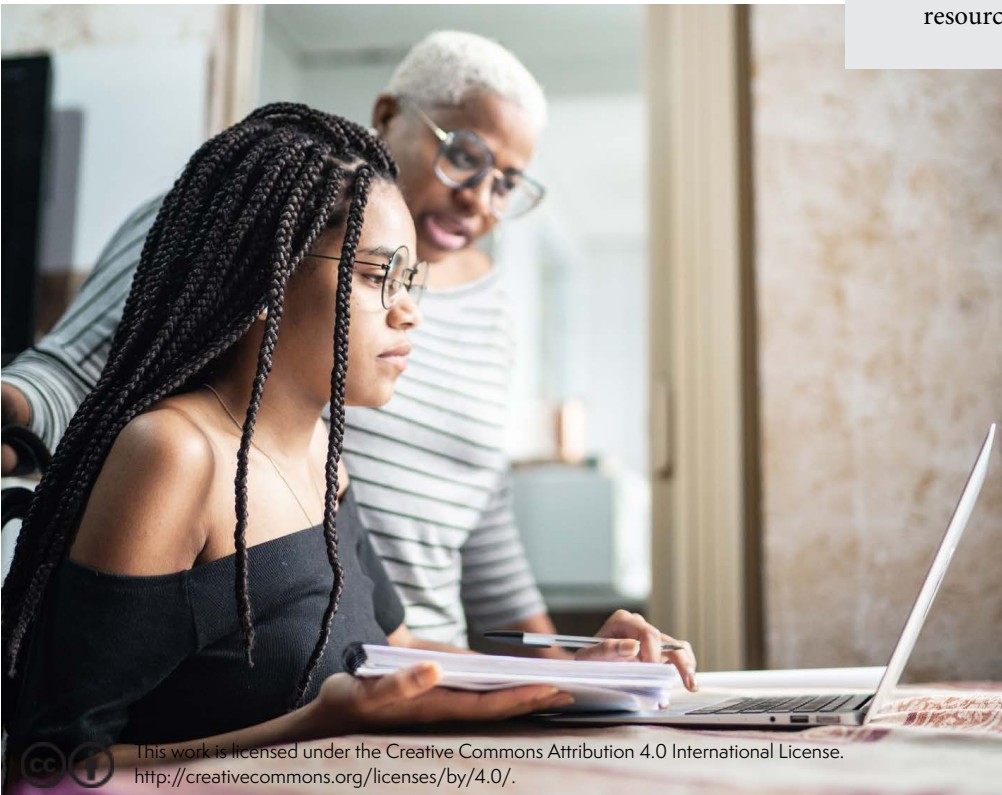
But it hasn't always been easy for parents and caregivers to figure out what teens should know and be able to do by the end of each grade – and how to discuss these topics with their children and their teachers.

Moreover, while families are usually able to help if kids get stuck in the early grades, the content gets more challenging as students get older, and students gain more ownership over their learning. Suddenly, parents and caregivers may feel like they don't have much help to offer. But that's not the case. Research confirms that families still have a big role to play in helping students learn. It's just a different role.

In addition to providing encouragement, a study of more than 50,000 students found that relating what middle and high school kids are learning in school to their future life goals is one of the most effective ways families can help. What doesn't work? Trying to be directly involved with schoolwork. It can feel to high school students like you're interfering or even confusing them. And this IS the time to encourage students to take more responsibility and be more independent; helping them take charge of their learning is important.

This guide was developed so students and their families can understand the most important English language arts content and skills that students should learn in high school.

¹Harvard Graduate School of Education (2009). Hill: Parents need to link schoolwork to future goals. <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/09/05/hill-parents-need-link-schoolwork-future-goals>.



HIGH SCHOOL

English Language Arts



Santa Barbara Unified
Every child, every chance, every day.

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- **What High Schoolers Are Learning** – What experts say is the most important content (knowledge and skills) for students to learn in English language arts during high school.
- **Talking About English language arts with your High Schooler** – Ideas for families and their teens to talk about school.
- **Tips for Talking with Teachers** – How high schoolers, parents, and teachers can work together to ensure success.
- **Tools and Resources to Help** – We've chosen a few resources that best match each grade's content.

STUDENT
ACHIEVEMENT
PARTNERS

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Typically, high school students take English courses in all four years of high school. These courses are generally titled English 9-12. All traditional high schools offer Ethnic Studies emphasis and Advanced Placement (AP) coursework for English, and some offer International Baccalaureate (IB) or academy-specific courses. As students progress to later years of high school, additional options for coursework that count towards English credit may also be available (for example, Dual Enrollment, Journalism, Mexican American Literature, etc.).

Regardless of the course and the focus of the content title, one key idea holds true: high schoolers should be engaged in reading, writing, and speaking about grade level texts of all kinds. Below are some of the specific skills high school students should be able to do in English class.

WHAT 9TH GRADERS ARE LEARNING



- Identifying complex characters and analyzing how they develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme
- Analyzing how a theme or central idea emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details in a text
- Using strategies to determine the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases, including denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings
- Analyzing the cumulative impact of an author's word choice on the meaning and tone of a text
- Analyzing a particular point-of-view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature
- Analyzing the introduction, development, and connections between ideas or events in informational text
- Developing claims fairly, supplying evidence for each, and creating an organization that establishes clear relationships among claims, reasons, and evidence in argumentative writing
- Using precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters; and providing a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved in narrative writing
- Producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- Drawing upon evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
- Using technology and multimedia to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically
- Responding thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarizing points of agreement and disagreement, and making new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



- Developed by the Mississippi Department of Education, these high-quality, rigorous texts represent varying cultures, genres, and facets of the human experience
https://www.mdek12.org/sites/default/files/Offices/MDE/OAE/OEER/Equipped/equipped_9-12th_2.pdf
- In addition to reading, keeping a reading journal helps students fully engage with what they are reading. They can include personal observations, questions, research notes, and/or observations about broader themes to help them build their comprehension.
<https://www.uwb.edu/wacc/what-we-do/resources/reading/journals>

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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Regardless of the course and the focus of the content title, one key idea holds true: high schoolers should be engaged in reading, writing, and speaking about grade level texts of all kinds. Below are some of the specific skills high school students should be able to do in English class.

WHAT 10TH GRADERS ARE LEARNING



- Determining a theme or central idea of a text and analyzing in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details
- Analyzing the cumulative impact of an author’s word choice on the meaning and tone of a text; identifying the tone and tone shifts in a text; and analyzing and how an author uses rhetoric to advance their point of view or purpose
- Citing strong and thorough textual evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis of text, research, and reflection
- Composing precise claims, distinguishing claims from alternate or opposing claims, and creating an organization that establishes clear relationships among claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence in argumentative writing
- Pointing out the strengths and limitations of claims and counterclaims fairly, in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns in argumentative writing
- Engaging and orienting readers by setting out a problem, situation, or observation, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; and creating a smooth progression of experiences or events in narrative writing
- Using narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters in narrative writing
- Conducting short and more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrowing or broadening the inquiry when appropriate; synthesizing multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation
- Developing and strengthening writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience
- Responding thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarizing points of agreement and disagreement, and making new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



- *The New York Times* Student Opinion invites students to comment on daily questions in response to content <https://www.nytimes.com/column/learning-student-opinion>
- Achieve the Core’s Reading Fluency Packet offers 40 passages to help students practice their reading fluency <https://achievethecore.org/page/1022/fluency-packet-for-the-9-10-grade-band>

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

WHAT 11TH GRADERS ARE LEARNING



- Citing strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of a text, including determining where a text leaves matters uncertain
- Determining two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyzing their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another
- Determining figurative and connotative meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text; and analyzing the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings
- Analyzing multiple interpretations of a narrative, evaluating how each version interprets the source text
- Analyzing & evaluating the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in their exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging
- Determining an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power or persuasiveness of a text
- Integrating and evaluating multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats to address a question or solve a problem
- Developing claims and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each, anticipating the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases in argumentative writing
- Using specific rhetorical devices to support assertions in argumentative writing
- Developing topics thoroughly by selecting the most significant and relevant facts, quotations, or other information and examples appropriate to an audience's knowledge of a topic in expository writing
- Using narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; and using precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters in narrative writing
- Developing and strengthening writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience
- Conducting short and more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrowing or broadening an inquiry when appropriate; and synthesizing multiple sources on a subject
- Coming to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly drawing on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas
- Integrating multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data
- Evaluating a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



- *The New York Times* Student Opinion invites students to comment on daily questions in response to content <https://www.nytimes.com/column/learning-student-opinion>
- Thoughtful writing prompts support students in developing their writing skills and help them to deepen their critical thinking and reflection about a given topic. *The New York Times* provides 1000 prompts for students on a variety of different topics. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/12/learning/over-1000-writing-prompts-for-students.html>

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

WHAT 12TH GRADERS ARE LEARNING



- Analyzing how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a literary text contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact
- Analyzing a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement) in literary text
- Analyzing a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explaining how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of an informational text
- Determining figurative and connotative meanings of words and phrases as they are used in a text; and analyzing the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings in informational texts
- Developing claims and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each, anticipating the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases in argumentative writing
- Using specific rhetorical devices to support assertions in argumentative writing
- Using narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters; and using precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters in narrative writing
- Gathering relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assessing the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrating information into a written text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and over reliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation
- Planning and presenting an argument that: supports a precise claim; provides a logical sequence for claims, counterclaims, and evidence; uses rhetorical devices to support assertions; uses varied syntax to link major sections of the presentation to create cohesion and clarity; and provides a concluding statement that supports the argument presented.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



- TIME100 Talks, an ongoing series of virtual conversations and experiences that convenes members of the TIME 100 community along with global leaders and experts from different fields to spotlight solutions to urgent global problems
<https://time.com/collection/time100-talks/>
- Khan Academy lesson series on writing a strong college admissions essay
<https://www.khanacademy.org/college-careers-more/college-admissions/applying-to-college/admissions-essays/v/writing-a-strong-college-admissions-essay>



TALKING ABOUT LITERACY WITH HIGH SCHOOLERS

High school is an opportunity for students to take more ownership over their learning. The content students learn will become increasingly sophisticated. Acknowledging a teen's interests throughout this time can help to engage them in grade-level reading and writing. The more grade level texts they read and the more opportunities they have to write in response to these kinds of texts, the more they will improve in their reading comprehension and writing abilities.

In class, teens will interact far more with complex ideas across different genres or categories, evaluate arguments, and expand their literary and cultural knowledge. They will also write and participate in conversations that challenge them to assert and defend claims on a given topic. These skills will take them far, not only with literacy, but in their science, social studies, math, and elective classes.

Below are a few tips on how to encourage your teen to consistently read and write.

- **Encourage regular writing:** Students can keep a writing journal; they can write emails; they can take notes about what they are learning; and/or they can research a given topic. Consistent, but varied, writing (for example, short, unedited writing, and writing they may come back to over multiple days) will help them to make connections continuously. Writing specifically about what they are reading is an excellent way to improve reading comprehension and knowledge.
- **Encourage regular reading:** Encourage your student to choose a book they want to read on their own each day. Reading lots of books over time is more important than the type of text. Let your student pick based on their interests and what makes them excited to read. At this age, students should ideally engage in reading fiction and non-fiction. Have conversations about what your student learned in their reading, and talk to them about what you're reading for enjoyment, or what you read for work or in your day-to-day life.
- **Encourage the use of technology** as a way for students to engage in reading, writing, speaking, and listening: Students can listen to podcasts and discuss current events; they can use social media to increase their understanding on a given topic; and/or they can blog about issues they care deeply about, etc. High schoolers use social media all the time, and they can use it for learning. They can develop media literacy as they are reading. Ask who wrote it and why, evaluate the specific claims made, and think about the impact of the text on readers.





TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS

At the high school level, reading and writing becomes increasingly more complex and sophisticated.

Throughout high school, students can use the following questions both as a self-assessment and for asking their teachers about their performance:

- What strengths do I bring to the classroom?
- In what ways do I demonstrate my strengths and what I have learned?
- What was I able to understand, write, and talk about as a result of what I read and learned?
- Was I able to write in ways that demonstrated that I understood what I am reading and learning?
- Was I able to use the writing process to sharpen my voice, organization, structure, creativity, and clarity of my writing?
- Was I able to speak and listen in class discussions and conversations in ways that demonstrated that I understood what I was reading and learning?
- Was I able to use evidence from the text to support my ideas and elaborate on my responses?

Families can also inquire about the content and skills students will learn in English language arts classes:

- What new perspectives will be learned about throughout the year?
- What are some complex, grade-level texts students will need to access and engage with? What supports are in place for students when they need them? What extension opportunities will students have when they need them?
- Are there specific texts you would recommend based on my student's interests?
- What texts will the class read? Will they represent a diverse set of perspectives?
- Will any of the texts read represent the students in the classroom?
- What types of authentic writing and communication tasks will students be working on?
- How will students use technology and digital media to learn content and demonstrate their learning?

