High School Parents®
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Help your teen use artificial intelligence in ethical ways

According to the *2026 Common Sense Media Census*, 85% of high school students use artificial intelligence (AI) for academic support. As this technology becomes a part of daily life, it is vital that students learn to avoid its pitfalls and use it responsibly.

By understanding what AI can and cannot do, your teen can verify the information it provides and use it to boost learning.

Share these facts with your teen:

- **AI is created by people.** It is not alive and does not know everything.
- **AI learns from us.** AI analyzes information from humans, but it cannot tell if facts are true and may provide wrong answers.
- **AI can be biased** and present one-sided information.
- **AI is not a human expert.** For important life questions, it's vital to talk to a trusted adult instead of relying on a chatbot.

Help your teen learn to use AI as a tool to enhance learning rather than as a shortcut to cheat or copy work. Students can use AI to:

- **Provide explanations** of challenging school topics, like the Pythagorean theorem.
- **Brainstorm new ideas,** spark creativity and find new ways to approach an assignment.
- **Sharpen new skills** by building self-tests or exploring a language.
- **Break down large assignments** into manageable tasks.

Source: *The Common Sense Media Census: AI Use by Tweens and Teens,* 2026.

Listen to your teen's ideas and opinions



"Could you please hear me out?" You have likely asked this question at work or with a family member. Even if you do not get your way, you want to know that your point of view was heard.

It should be no surprise that teens feel the same way. Giving them a chance to share their thoughts makes them happier, more engaged and more confident.

When your teen has something to say, take the time to listen carefully. If your teen makes a good point, really think about it. For example, your teen might have a fair idea about changing chore responsibilities, or a solid reason for wanting to stay up a bit later on a Friday night.

You may not always agree with your teen, but by listening, you show respect. This helps build the confidence your teen will need to speak up and succeed in school and in life.

Source: K.N. Marbell-Pierre and others, "Parental Autonomy Support in Two Cultures: The Moderating Effects of Adolescents' Self-Construals," *Child Development*.

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It's not too early to chart a course for graduation and beyond



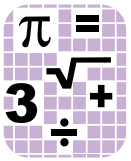
Whether you have a freshman or a senior, there are lots of things your high school student can do this year to prepare to graduate and move on to career training or college. Here's a partial list:

- **Freshman year,** encourage involvement in activities that are meaningful to your teen. Have your student tell the school counselor about post-graduation goals. Explore options, requirements and ways to finance higher education.
- **Sophomore year**, encourage your teen to research schools of interest and take virtual tours online. Make sure your student is taking challenging classes that meet high school graduation requirements.
- **Junior year,** your teen should take required college admission tests and confirm that classes taken and planned for meet college expectations, which are often more rigorous than those of high school.
- **Senior year,** your teen should begin applying to schools or training programs. Suggest posting due dates for applications and financial aid forms, such as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form available at https://studentaid.gov.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

—Eleanor Roosevelt

Your teen's math success starts with consistent daily practice



Math is one of the most useful classes your teen will take in school, and it can also be one of the toughest. There is no magic trick to becoming a math whiz, but there is a clear path to improvement: consistent effort. The best math students practice every single day.

Share these math success tips with your teen:

- **Show up every day.** Math builds on itself, and each lesson depends on the ones before it. If an absence is unavoidable, your teen should ask for help immediately to catch up.
- **Take and review class notes.** While taking notes, your teen should write down examples and questions for the teacher. Reviewing those notes every evening keeps the information fresh in your teen's mind.
- **Speak up during class.** Your teen should ask questions if something is confusing. If your teen is stuck, it is very likely that other classmates are also confused.
- **Learn from past work.** Reworking old quizzes and assignments is an effective way to remember how to solve different types of problems.
- **Manage time.** Your teen should never wait until right before class to start an assignment. Scheduling daily work sessions will help your teen complete work and go into class prepared to learn.
- **Practice with sample problems.** Your teen can look online or ask the teacher for extra practice problems to prepare for upcoming tests.

Are you helping your shy teen find ways to cope?



Nearly everyone has felt shy at one time or another. But some teens seem to be shy in *every* new situation. They find it hard to make friends and are afraid to speak up in class. Connecting with others can also be a challenge.

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 love and appreciation for your teen?
2. **Do you help your teen find** and get involved in activities with like-minded students?
3. **Do you encourage** volunteer activities? Helping others makes teens feel good about themselves.
4. **Do you help your teen** role-play social situations? Knowing what to say can help a teen build confidence.
5. **Do you talk** with teachers if shyness affects your teen's performance?

How well are you doing?

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

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children.

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Help your high schooler get the most out of group projects



Group projects are often assigned to help students practice collaboration and build important skills for the future. Working as a team allows them to share ideas, learn from classmates and achieve more together than anyone could alone.

While group work sometimes present challenges—such as balancing different schedules or keeping everyone on track—these moments also provide learning opportunities. With a little planning, your teen can have a positive experience.

Encourage your teen to:

- **Choose partners wisely.** While it is fun to work with friends, your teen should avoid teaming up with people who are disorganized or too busy.
- **Set small deadlines.** Success happens when everyone does a fair share. The group should set due dates for each part of the project, so if a member falls behind, the rest of the group can help or fix the problem.
- **Plan for emergencies.** Problems happen, such as broken computers or illness. Encourage your teen to build extra time into the schedule to handle these surprises.
- **Share the lead.** One person should not make every decision. Studies show that one person who refuses to listen to the rest of the group can have a negative impact on the overall project. Your teen should encourage everyone to feel ownership in the finished product.
- **Ask for help early.** If the group gets stuck or someone refuses to do a fair share of the work, your teen should talk to the teacher. Asking for advice early makes it easier to solve problems before they get worse.

Source: K. Eckart, "Group project? Taking turns, working with friends may improve grades," Science Daily.

Suggest that your high schooler focus on three daily goals



It is common for teens to feel like the center of the world—which can make it hard to focus on responsibilities or the needs of others. Here is a simple exercise to help your teen broaden perspective and get more accomplished each day.

Encourage your teen to set three simple goals. Think of these as the Three S's:

1. **School.** What is the most important academic task for the day? It might be finishing a tough project, studying for a big test, or asking a teacher for help with a confusing topic. Accomplishing one main goal helps make a busy schedule feel much more manageable.
2. **Self.** What is one healthy thing your teen could do for self-care? This could be scheduling 30 minutes for exercise, putting the phone away to take a nap or taking time to read for pleasure. Making time for self-care keeps stress levels low and energy levels high.
3. **Someone else.** What could your teen do to help someone else that day? Reach out to a new student? Run errands for an elderly neighbor? Write a note to a friend going through a rough time? Acts of kindness strengthen relationships and improve the school community.

Questions & Answers

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

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 help your teen learn to make well-reasoned decisions:

- **Offer plenty of opportunities** to make low-risk decisions. Suppose your teen is responsible for yard work every week. On Monday, say, "The lawn needs to be raked before this weekend. You decide when you want to rake it." Don't mention it during the week. Simply let your teen decide when to do it.
- **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 of making the wrong decision. Let your teen know that in life, things don't always work out the way we plan—and that's OK. 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 that job offer."

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It Matters: Literacy Skills

Reading for enjoyment has many benefits



High school students do a lot of school-related reading. So why is it important for them to make time for pleasure reading, too?

When teens read for fun, they don't need to worry about memorizing every detail for a test. They can simply enjoy the story, which helps them read at a more natural, faster pace. Teens who read quickly also tend to understand more of what they read. Their vocabularies grow, and these benefits help them succeed with both school assignments and standardized tests.

To encourage your teen to read for pleasure:

- **Show that reading is fun.** If you are reading something you enjoy, share it with your teen.
- **Read what your teen reads.** Ask to see an article your teen is reading. Talk about how it connects to your life. Ask your teen to do the same.
- **Listen to audiobooks.** Books that seem too hard to read alone can come to life when they are read aloud. Listening to a book strengthens vocabulary, fluency and listening skills. Suggest that your teen listen to them while exercising, doing chores or just relaxing.
- **Remove pressure to finish.** Remind your teen that it is not necessary to finish every book. If a book is boring or too difficult, your teen can just try another title. The key is for your teen to keep up the reading habit.

Take the 15-minute reading challenge with your teenager

High school keeps students very busy. However, every teen needs a strong vocabulary and reading skills to succeed—and the best way to get better at reading is to practice every single day.

Make a pact with your teen that you will both spend 15 minutes each day reading. Fifteen minutes is easy. Your teen could wake up 15 minutes earlier and read in the morning, or spend 15 minutes reading before falling asleep at night. Your student could read during lunch or right after classes end.

Those 15-minute sessions will add up quickly. Fifteen minutes a day is almost two hours each week—or



over 90 hours a year! That's 90 hours of practicing skills that your teen will need in years to come!

Are you and your teen ready to take the challenge?

Share targeted reading strategies for different subjects



Does your teen know that different subjects require different reading strategies? Support your teen's success by sharing techniques for reading:

- **Math.** Encourage your teen to read explanations at least twice. The first reading should be done quickly to get an overview. For the second reading, have your teen concentrate on the key points, take notes and work through sample problems step by step. This will help your student understand how to proceed when solving that type of problem in the future.
- **History.** Suggest that your teen start at the last page and read the questions or summary. This will provide an idea of the key points of the chapter. Then, your teen should check the headings and words in boldface type, and pay special attention to photos and graphs, which often contain crucial information. Only after doing these things should your teen start at the beginning and read to the end.
- **Science.** Have your teen start by identifying vocabulary words and learning their definitions. Encourage your teen to look for common word parts, such as prefixes or suffixes. For example, knowing that *bio-* means life helps a student realize that *biology* is the study of living things, making it easier to understand other terms like *biome* and *antibiotic*.