

# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

November 2010  
Vol. 18, No. 3

Loudoun County Public Schools  
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## Research highlights five key tasks of parenting 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 tuned in to what your teen is doing, and with whom. Just as important, 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.** Your example is even more important now. Show your teen what a loving parent, a responsible citizen or a good neighbor do. And answer her questions in ways that are truthful, but still recognize her level of maturity.
- 5. Provide and advocate.** Teens need a network of supporting 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. Rae Simpson, *Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action*, Harvard School of Public Health, [www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/parenting/report.pdf](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/chc/parenting/report.pdf).

## Encourage creativity to boost learning



Most little kids love learning. High school students, however, can find learning dull. Part of this disconnect might have to do with the kinds of work that are expected of students.

Elementary-aged children are asked to complete projects that allow them to be creative and take intellectual risks.

It's more difficult to find ways to creatively write a 10-page paper on the Louisiana Purchase or innovatively solve a chemistry equation. There is often only one correct answer for high school students to find.

So remind your teen of her younger self's love of learning by asking her to help you solve problems around your home, like how to double a recipe or how to make a squirrel-proof bird feeder. There's no pressure of being incorrect, and your teen will be using creativity and reinforcing important real-life science and math skills.

**Source:** Winnie Hu, "Studying Engineering Before They Can Spell It," *The New York Times*, June 13, 2010, [www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/education/14engineering.html?pagewanted=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/education/14engineering.html?pagewanted=1).

# Research shows 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—have trouble getting enough sleep. Their natural rhythm is to sleep late and stay up later—the exact opposite of the typical school day.

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

- **Encourage your teen** to stick to a bedtime routine. Experts say dimming the lights at night and avoiding computers right before bed can make it easier to fall asleep.

- **Don't let your teen sleep** all week-end. 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—and that'll kick off another weary week.
- **Suggest exercise.** Sports, running and other activities—at least a few hours before bedtime—will help your teen sleep soundly.

**Source:** Sarah Spinks, "Adolescents and Sleep: A summary of what research knows about teenagers' need for sleep and why sleep affects memory and learning," PBS, [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/from/sleep.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/from/sleep.html).

**"Parents need to fill a child's bucket of self-esteem so high that the rest of the world can't poke enough holes to drain it dry."**

—Alvin Price

# Share paper-writing tips to make research papers easier for teens



You can't write your teen's research papers for him, but you can still help. Here are tips to share with your teen:

1. **Write a thesis statement.** Have your teen boil down everything he wants to say into a single sentence. It should state the position he is taking in his paper. It should also set up the way he will organize the paper. The thesis should also point to his final conclusion.
2. **Make an outline.** Your teen should include all the main points he plans to cover in his paper.
3. **Write the rough draft.**
4. **Be sure to include sources.** The purpose of a research paper is to show the research your teen has done. As he writes, he needs to state where he got his facts. He should ask the teacher for how to properly cite his sources.
5. **Read the paper out loud.** This can help your teen "hear" if something doesn't seem to make sense.
6. **Revise and rewrite.** The paper may take several drafts.
7. **Proofread.** Remember, even a spell check doesn't catch all misspelled words.

# Are you staying connected with your teenager?



Staying connected with your teen is important during the high school years. Are you doing all you can to keep your

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

- \_\_\_ 1. **Do you spend one-on-one time** with your teen on a weekly basis?
- \_\_\_ 2. **Do you plan to eat together** as a family as often as you can?
- \_\_\_ 3. **Do you have televisions** in common areas instead of bedrooms? Take sets out of bedrooms and put them in places where people watch together.
- \_\_\_ 4. **Do you ask your teen** to give you help when you need it, especially when it's something she's good at? Working side by side is a great way to stay close.
- \_\_\_ 5. **Do you attend school events** even when your teen says it isn't important if you come?

**How well are you doing?**

Each *yes* means you are keeping the connection between you and your teen strong. For *no* answers, try those ideas.

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Practical Ideas for Parents to Help Their Children. ISSN: 1523-1291

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474.  
Fax: 1-800-216-3667.

Or visit: [www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com).

Published monthly September through May by The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc., an independent, private agency.  
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## Discover creative ways to get your high schooler reading



You may feel like you've tried everything to get your teen to read—with-out a lot of success. Part of the struggle can be blamed on the book's rival for your teen's attention: the TV. Over the course of a month, children see an average of 1000 commercials. Out of those commercials, maybe one or two will be advertising books or reading.

But reading is too important to give up on. Not only is it the backbone of school success, but it also impacts your teen's financial future. Studies show that people who read frequently make an average of \$100,000 more in their lifetimes than people who don't read. To make reading part of your teen's life:

- **Listen to books in the car.** If you see your teen stalling when it's time to get out of the car, suggest she pick up the paper copy of the book she was listening to so she doesn't miss out on the action.
- **Read a great classic**—and then tell your teen that it is probably too difficult for her to read. Chances are good she'll be sneaking chapters whenever your back is turned!
- **Resort to bribery.** Call it "reading week" and offer your teen an additional \$1 on her allowance for every hour she spends reading instead of watching TV. She might just keep up the habit even after that week.

**Source:** G. Spencer, "Getting Teens to Read," [www.gwynnspencer.com/Articles/teens%20reading.pdf](http://www.gwynnspencer.com/Articles/teens%20reading.pdf).

## Study shows that even teens who believe in honesty lie



There are scary statistics about teens and honesty. 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 school students admitted to cheating.

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

- **Expect it.** Tell your teen that you expect honesty. Make statements like "In this family, we always tell the truth so that everyone can believe one another. Tell me the truth and I will do the same."
- **Cultivate it.** In order for your teen to be honest with you, she needs to feel comfortable telling you the truth. If you are too harsh—"You forgot to put out the trash

this morning. You are grounded for life!"—your teen may become afraid to tell the truth. She 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 offer to 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 for when she is honest and admits mistakes.

**Source:** Michele Borba, "The secret to raising honest kids," iVillage, <http://micheleborba.ivillage.com/parenting/archives/2008/02/the-secret-to-raising-honest-k.html>.

**Q:** Is it possible for a teen to become addicted to video games? My 16-year-old son spends all his free time playing an online game. He seems to have no friendships outside this online world. He was never a stellar student, but he used to earn mostly B's and C's. Now his grades have dropped at least a full letter. What can I do?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** There is a disagreement among experts about whether one can become "addicted" to video games. But there is no question that a teen who is acting like your son has a problem.

To get to the bottom of the problem:

- **Approach the subject** by talking about his grades. Stay calm as you have this conversation and start by saying, "Can we talk about what's happening with your grades?"
- **Check with his teachers** to see if he's turning in work. That offers a good excuse for the step that has to come next—setting limits on how much time he can spend on the game. "If you don't have time to do your algebra, you don't have time to play the game."
- **Move the computer** to a place where you can monitor his use. (If he can play the game on his cell phone, you'll need to limit access to it as well.)
- **Let your son know** you're on his side. You're worried about him, and you want to help him address a problem that is clearly getting out of hand.

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Respect

## Conversation can develop your teen's self-respect



Ask parents if their teen wears a seat belt and nearly all—84 percent—will say *yes*. But a survey by Students

Against Drunk Driving found that fewer than half of all teens—45 percent—actually wear seat belts.

Seat belt use is just one small example. But it points out that teens and parents don't always communicate as well as parents think.

Yet teens want to keep up an open dialogue with their parents. And the survey found that when teens have the chance to talk with their parents about the things that are bothering them, they want even *more* communication.

This open conversation will help your teen develop the self-respect she will need to live out her values. How can you do it? You can:

- **Make discussing** challenging issues a part of your everyday conversation. Don't wait for a big talk. Instead, discuss TV shows, stories you read in the news or issues that arise at school.
- **Speak in a calm voice** when you talk with your teen. Even if she says something startling, try not to lose your temper. If things get too heated, take a break.
- **Try not to interrupt.** This shows respect for your teen's point of view and teaches her how to have respectful conversations.
- **Don't always** have to have the last word.

**Source:** Students Against Drunk Driving, "Teens Today" Survey, [www.sadd.org/teens today/teens today pdfs/survey.pdf](http://www.sadd.org/teens today/teens today pdfs/survey.pdf).

## Is your high schooler grumbling or speaking disrespectfully?

**Y**ou've told Jack to take out the trash. As he puts it out, he mutters, "How did you keep the house clean before I was born?"

Is that grumbling—or is it more serious? One way to tell is by matching your teen's actions with his words.

If he's actually taking out the trash, it's probably just grumbling. And in general, you can ignore it.

Or you can agree with him in a good-natured way. If your teen says, "I always have to walk the dog." Just say, "Yes, you do." As long as you don't get angry, this grumbling isn't likely to go anywhere.

But sometimes your teen's responses may be a little stronger. He may say, "You can't tell me what to do," or "Just shut up already."



That kind of talk is disrespectful, and it should be unacceptable.

Let your teen know that when he speaks to you disrespectfully there will be a consequence. Then be sure to enforce that consequence every time.

**Source:** Ray Guarendi, *Discipline that Lasts a Lifetime: The Best Gift You Can Give Your Kids*, ISBN: 1-569-55368-8, St. Anthony Messenger Press.

## R-E-S-P-E-C-T shows your teen how to behave respectfully



Remember the famous Aretha Franklin song? It tells teens all they need to know about the things they can do to

demonstrate respect for themselves and others.

**R Reach out to others.** Learn about their thoughts and beliefs. It is harder to disrespect someone once you understand what he believes.

**E Enjoy differences** among people. They make life interesting.

**S Show respect** for rules and laws by following them.

**P Put on your best manners.**

One of the easiest ways to show respect for other people is by treating them with courtesy.

**E Eat right,** get plenty of sleep and exercise. All of these are ways to show respect for yourself.

**C Care for animals,** plants and the environment. Respecting and protecting the environment is a responsibility we all share.

**T Treat property** that does not belong to you the same way you would treat anything you own.

**Source:** Barbara A. Lewis, *What Do You Stand For? For Kids*, ISBN: 1-575-42174-7, Free Spirit Publishing.