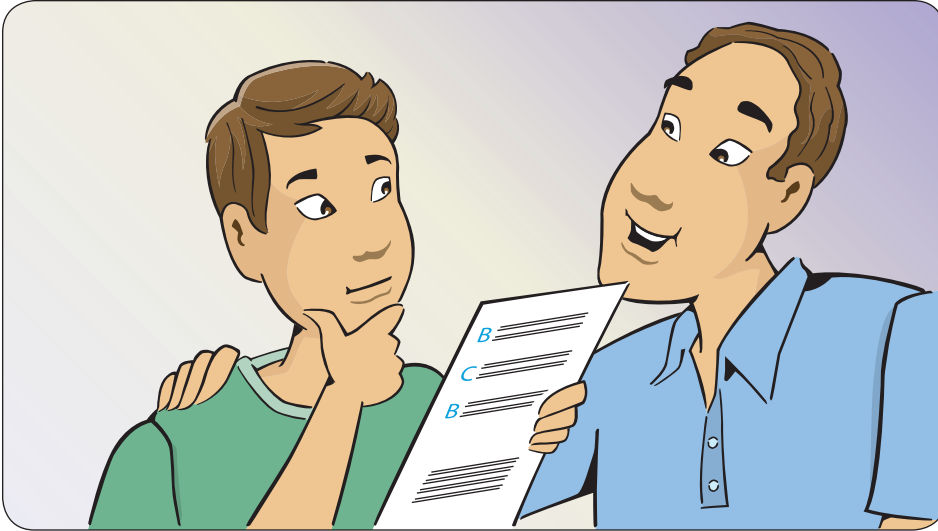


# High School Parents<sup>®</sup>

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*still make the difference!*



## Encourage your teen to take responsibility for learning

Your teen earned a bad grade—actually, a *terrible* grade—in Spanish last marking period. What should you do?

Perhaps the most useful thing you can do is to help him “own” it. Most teens have quite a knack for placing the blame elsewhere—on the teacher, on the “stupid” test. Instead, help your high schooler figure out exactly what he did to *earn* the bad grade.

Until your teen takes responsibility for what he did, he’s not going to be able to make the changes he needs to make. Here are some questions he should consider:

- **Did he invest the time he needed?**  
How much time did he actually spend working on his Spanish?

Did he review the new vocabulary he learned in class? Did he turn in his homework? Did he study for tests? He is responsible for how he uses his time.

- **Does he know *how* to study?**  
Sometimes, teens think that if they just skim the chapter, they have “studied.” Teens need to learn that studying is an active process. If he doesn’t know how, encourage him to ask his teacher how to study. He can also search the Internet for college study sites.
- **Did he assume** he is just “not smart” in the class? Remind your teen that nearly any subject can be learned with effort.

**Source:** J.B. Bader, *Dean’s List: 11 Habits of Highly Successful College Students*, Johns Hopkins University Press.

## Make sure your teen is in every class, every day



Many teens think skipping class isn’t a big deal. They’re wrong. Studies show that students

who skip class frequently:

- **Report that they are bored** in class.
- **Fall behind** and become unmotivated because they don’t understand the topics being taught.
- **Feel disconnected** from their school.
- **Are more likely** to consider dropping out of school.

Insist your teen attend every class, every day. Be sure to:

- **Make school attendance** a priority and talk about why it is important.
- **Contact the teacher** if you suspect your teen may be skipping a class. If your teen knows you will check up on her, she will be more likely to stay in school.
- **Remind your teen** that attendance is the law—skipping even one class is considered truancy.

**Source:** E. Yazzie-Mintz, “Students are bored, many skip school,” IU News Room, <http://news.info.iu.edu/news/page/normal/4948.html>.

# Help your teenager prepare to combat peer pressure in school



Peer pressure is a part of everyday life. It can be harmful—like when teens convince another to drink. It can also

be harmless—like when teens ask another to eat lunch with them. It can even be helpful—like when teens convince someone to join a study group.

In order to know when it's okay to follow the crowd, your teen needs to know how to handle peer pressure. Here's how to help:

- **Talk about issues** like drugs, alcohol, sex and dating. Make sure your teen knows your family's values and what you think about these topics. This

will help her know when it's time to stand her ground.

- **Banish bullying.** Explain to your teen that bullying is never the right thing to do. She should know that if a group of friends begins to bully another teen, she should refuse to participate. And if someone is in danger of being hurt, it is her responsibility to notify an adult.
- **Ask your teen's opinion** on a few issues you are dealing with. Really listen to what she has to say. This encourages her to think for herself in many situations.

**Source:** M. Hardcastle, "Beating Peer Pressure," About.com: Teen Advice, <http://teenadvice.about.com/cs/peerpressure/a/blpeerpressure.htm>.

# Seven character traits may determine your teen's success



When you think of "good character" you may think of a person who is kind, generous and thoughtful. These are great charac-

teristics for a person to have. But recently, research has been focusing on other aspects of character: *zest*, *grit*, *self-control*, *social intelligence*, *gratitude*, *optimism* and *curiosity*.

Students who possess these qualities are more likely to succeed in school. They're more likely to keep trying after setbacks. In fact, students with these characteristics are more likely to succeed than students who are intelligent but not as driven.

To build:

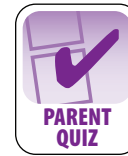
1. **Zest**, show enthusiasm for what your teen is learning. "Wow, zebra fish can regrow their fins? That's really interesting!"
2. **Grit**, praise your teen's perseverance. "I'm really proud of how you

stuck with that geometry homework until you got it."

3. **Self-control**, give your teen responsibilities. Being able to complete tasks at home without being reminded means he will be able to direct himself at school.
4. **Social intelligence**, suggest that your teen put himself in others' shoes. "Why do you think Will reacted like that?"
5. **Gratitude**, go beyond just making sure your teen says *please* and *thank you*. Discuss why he feels grateful.
6. **Optimism**, encourage your teen to look at the bright side of events.
7. **Curiosity**, help your teen explore more about what he is learning. Head to the library or research information online.

**Source:** P. Tough, "What if the Secret to Success Is Failure?" The New York Times, [www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/magazine/what-if-the-secret-to-success-is-failure.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/18/magazine/what-if-the-secret-to-success-is-failure.html).

# Who is to blame for arguments with your teen?



Teens and parents don't always see eye to eye.

It's natural for parents to think arguments are all their teen's fault. But

before you lay the blame at your teen's feet, ask yourself these questions:

\_\_\_ 1. **Do you avoid bringing up** past problems when you are discussing a current problem?

\_\_\_ 2. **Do you stay on track** when your teen tries to change the subject by criticizing you?

\_\_\_ 3. **Do you acknowledge** that you may not have remembered something you said correctly if you and your teen are disagreeing about something you said?

\_\_\_ 4. **Do you recognize the point** at which your teen starts to feel under attack and stop the conversation to wait until you are both calmer?

\_\_\_ 5. **Do you make a real effort** to understand your teen's position?

**How well are you doing?**

Each yes answer means you are trying to reduce the intensity of arguments you have with your teen. For *no* answers try the ideas in the quiz.

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## It's important to stay involved in your high schooler's learning



When your child was in elementary school, it was probably easy to help him with his homework or understand what he was learning. But in high school, you face two problems:

1. **Teens.** Your teen is probably less likely to talk about his day than he was when he was younger.
2. **Advanced classes.** Even if you can get your teen to open up, you might not understand a word he's saying about his last chemistry lesson.

But you know parent involvement is important, and you want to stay involved with your teen's learning. So how can you help? You can:

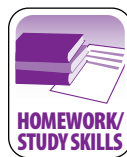
- **Talk to him about school.** Find out who his favorite teacher is. Ask what class he finds the most

interesting—maybe he wants to pursue a career in that subject.

- **Keep up high expectations.** One in three high school students say their parents have no idea how they are doing in school. Make sure your teen knows that he may not always *be* the best, but he should always *do* his best.
- **Attend school events.** This shows your teen that his schooling is important to you.
- **Be familiar** with your teen's homework, testing and project schedule. Even if you don't understand exactly what he's being tested on, saying, "Isn't your pre-calculus test tomorrow?" reminds your teen that you are paying attention.

**Source:** S. Blaney, *Please Stop the Roller Coaster*, ChangeWorks Publishing.

## Build your teen's vocabulary to improve performance on the SAT



English has the most words of any language on Earth. There are over 300,000 words in the English language, with about 35,000 that are regularly used.

It's no wonder, then, that the vocabulary section of the SAT can be so hard to prepare for. The test creators have literally thousands of words from which to choose!

Luckily, there are ways your teen can build his vocabulary. First, encourage your teen to ask his English teacher for a list of words commonly found on the SAT. Then, suggest that your teen:

- **Make flashcards.** It's the oldest trick in the book—and one of the most effective. Once your teen

has created flashcards, have him spend 10 minutes reviewing a selection of the cards at the end of each day's homework. That little bit of effort will add up to a big payoff when he takes the SAT.

- **Read.** Reading is still the best way to build vocabulary. It shows students how words are actually used.
- **Go online.** Try out <http://testyourvocab.com>, which claims to "measure" how many words you know. Encourage your teen to take the online test now—and then take it again in a couple months to see how his vocabulary has grown. He could also visit other websites, such as <http://vocabtest.com>, which offers SAT-style vocabulary questions.

**Q:** My daughter loves cheerleading. But she has put on some weight this year (mostly muscle) and she is afraid she won't make the team next year. I am afraid she is starting to develop an eating disorder. She avoids eating with the family when she can, and she leaves the table early. She works out even after practice is over. Should I say something?

### Questions & Answers

**A:** Eating disorders are sadly becoming much more common among female athletes. On top of society's pressure on women to be thin, athletes in some sports face special pressures. Cheerleaders are the center of attention when they are cheering. Much of that attention focuses on how they look. It is no surprise, then, that studies of college-level cheerleaders have found them to be at higher risk of developing eating disorders.

Talk with your daughter. Instead of focusing on her eating, talk about staying healthy. Focus on what you've seen. Don't say, "I think you have an eating disorder." Say, "I am concerned that you are spending so much time working out."

Talk with her coach. Discuss the behavior you have seen at home. Ask her for her help in promoting the idea of a healthy body weight for athletes.

However, if you see the behavior continuing, get medical help. If your daughter resists, tell her you simply want to put your mind at ease. Eating disorders are serious. Left untreated, they can lead to serious health problems or even death.

—Kris Amundson,  
The Parent Institute

# It Matters: Motivation

## Making a plan can increase motivation



When she's working on something she wants to do, your teen can be highly motivated. She'll work for hours

on designing the set for the school play, for example. So why do you have to keep telling her to finish her science lab report?

One reason is that when you tell your teen to do something, she may feel like you are nagging her. And most teens have developed the skill of tuning out parental nagging.

Still, there are ways you can motivate your teen to do things, even if they aren't high on her list of favorite tasks. You can:

- **Discuss the consequences.** Acknowledge that there is probably a reason she's avoiding the task. Then ask, "But what's going to happen if you keep putting it off?" That way, you get her to recognize the consequences of not taking action.
- **Ask if she'd like to make a plan.** "Let's brainstorm and create a schedule that will work for you." Teens are always more motivated to act on a plan they helped develop.
- **Help with time management.** Teens often think that they can do more than they realistically can accomplish. You might say, "How long did the lab report take you last week? Maybe leaving 20 minutes won't be enough time."

**Source:** J. Nelsen, "How Do You Motivate a Teen," Positive Discipline, [www.positivediscipline.com/articles/teen-motivation.html](http://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/teen-motivation.html).

## Is your high schooler lacking motivation or executive skills?

She constantly hands in assignments late—if she turns them in at all. She dawdles until she runs out of time. Then she rushes through and hands in sloppy work.

She may not lack motivation. Instead, she may be missing what scientists call "executive skills." These are the skills that allow us to plan and organize activities.

These skills are among the last to develop. In some students, they are especially weak (a problem that tends to run in families).

Help your teen improve on executive skills by encouraging her to:

- **Make checklists.** Help your teen think about each step she needs to take.
- **Minimize clutter.** Have her schedule a weekly time to clean



her work space so she can find her math notebook and research for her history paper.

- **Use visual reminders.** Have her post a big calendar above her study space.

**Source:** P. Dawson, "Lazy—Or Not?" *Educational Leadership*, October 2010, ASCD.

## Two steps can help you motivate your underachieving teenager



You know he has the ability to do better in school and his teachers say the same thing. But he isn't doing well.

As underachievers move into high school the consequences get more serious. They may not be able to take challenging classes. So they are caught in a downward spiral—they are less interested and they do worse in school.

Stopping the cycle of underachievement is a challenge. But it is important to try. Help your teen:

1. **Find a reason to be motivated.** Nearly all teens have something

that excites them—a subject, sport or activity. Talk with your teen about that subject. What would he like to learn? How can you help him achieve his learning goals?

2. **Translate that excitement to a school project.** Does your teen love movies? Perhaps he could talk with his English teacher about creating a video for a class project. If he's excited about dance, perhaps he can try out for the school musical.

**Source:** J.S. Battle, "Motivating the Underachiever—How to Motivate Teenagers, Students," [www.about-underachieving-teens.com/motivate-underachievers.html](http://www.about-underachieving-teens.com/motivate-underachievers.html).