

# Helping Students Learn<sup>®</sup>

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



January 2020

Sierra Charter School

## Strengthen your high schooler's motivation to succeed this year

The calendar year may have changed, but for many students, resuming school in January seems like more of the same. To recharge your teen's motivation in the second half of the school year, encourage her to:

- **Think about the difference** between doing homework and studying. Doing homework means completing assigned work. Studying means making an effort to learn the material for herself—until she's sure she understands it. Make sure your teen allows time to study every day.
- **Take on an academic challenge.** Some teens just coast by, taking the easiest courses and doing the minimum work necessary. But to prepare for college and careers, they need to step up. Is your teen taking the most rigorous classes she can manage? Is she getting as much from her high school education as she can? If not, help her think about how she could increase the challenge level.
- **Get organized.** Does it take your teen 20 minutes to find her calculator? Discuss what her disorganization is costing her. If she were organized, she could have more time for things she enjoys. If she spent a few minutes in the afternoon reviewing and prioritizing her assignments, she could avoid being blindsided late at night when she's too tired to think tasks through.



## Persuasive writing boosts thinking

Teens are known for expressing strong opinions—something you may have noticed when establishing limits or consequences for your teen.

In addition to taking a stand on an issue, it is important for students to understand the different sides of the argument. Have your teen write a persuasive letter to help him develop this critical thinking skill. Here's how:

- **Find out what your teen** feels strongly about. Does your town's curfew for teens drive him up the wall? Does he think fishing should be an Olympic sport?

- **Challenge him to write** a letter to an official expressing his opinion. Help him find the appropriate person to write to.
- **Suggest that he research** the topic so he can write a well-reasoned explanation of his position and address opposing viewpoints.

By trying to persuade others, your teen can build his thinking and writing skills in a practical way—and he may even change the world.

## Focus your teen's resolve on attendance

If your teen makes only one New Year's resolution this year, suggest that it be to get to class on time every day. It's the best way to ensure she won't miss important things like the teacher's emphasis on a topic or the class discussion. And she'll be present if the teacher shows an alternative way to solve a problem that's easier than the one in the textbook!



## Encourage study planning

Preparation is critical for success on tests. Making a study plan will help your teen prepare effectively. To create one, have him:

- **Review past tests.** Sample tests and old tests the teacher may make available can help your teen see what is expected.
- **Figure out what he still needs** to learn. If your teen has missed any schoolwork, he'll need to plan time to catch up.
- **Schedule study times.** On a calendar, have him cross out times when he can't study, such as during classes. Then he can block out the times he plans to study.
- **Allow time** for a final review the night before the test.

## Instill more responsibility

Your teen is in training for adulthood. Assuming more responsibility for herself is the way she'll get there. Ask your teen to:

- **Make** her own appointments.
- **Create** a savings plan.
- **Plan** a family outing. Have her learn about places to visit and create a budget.
- **Keep up** with the news. Learning about issues world and local leaders deal with will help her be an informed voter.





## How can I steer my teen driver back toward family?

**Q:** My son just got his driver's license. Now we never see him. When I ask where he's going, he says he's studying with friends. I'm a little worried though, and I miss our time together. What should I do?

**A:** Your teen is relishing his newly-earned independence. But that doesn't mean that his need for family time has lessened. He may be able to drive, but he still needs you to model values and advise him about topics from school, work and finances to dating and sex.

To provide the necessary balance:

- **Require specific details** on where he's going, who will be there and whether an adult will be present.
- **Set an earlier curfew** on school nights, and limit the number of nights a week your teen may be away from home.
- **Host study groups.** If your teen is working on a project with other students, offer to have them meet in your home.
- **Connect in fun ways.** Schedule time with your teen to do something you will both enjoy. You might sign up for an auto maintenance class or make up new sandwich combinations and try them out on the family.



## Do you reinforce social media caution?

The amount of time teens spend on social media continues to grow. So it's important for parents and teens to guard against any negative effects. Are you encouraging social media safety? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

\_\_\_ **1. Do you talk** with your teen about the dangers of sharing personal information online?

\_\_\_ **2. Do you explain** that posting about drugs and alcohol can damage her college and employment chances?

\_\_\_ **3. Do you remind** your teen that social media posts rarely give a complete, realistic picture of someone's life?

\_\_\_ **4. Do you ask** your teen about all the social media platforms she uses and insist that she include you in her networks?

\_\_\_ **5. Do you set limits** on when, where and for how long your teen can use social media?

### How well are you doing?

*More yes answers mean you are helping your teen avoid the downsides of social media. For each no, try that idea.*

*"Let go of who you think you're supposed to be; embrace who you are."*

—Brené Brown

## Discuss the clues that help teens take better notes

In order to take helpful class notes, students must pay close attention to what they hear. To help your teen recognize that something is important and he should write it down, encourage him to listen and watch for times when the teacher:

- **Repeats a point or phrase.**
- **Speaks more loudly** or distinctly.
- **Provides a list** of items in a category.
- **Defines a term.**
- **Writes something** on the board.
- **Pauses to give** students time to write.
- **Summarizes a main idea.**

## Make a learning connection

Is your teen willing to practice a new song on the guitar until she has it just right, but also sure that she "just can't do math"? Many teens do not see the connection between practice and results in the classroom.

Remind your teen that the same strategy she uses to master her music is the one that will help her get the knack of geometry—and anything else she puts her mind to.



## Don't forget the final step

Thorough proofreading will help your teen get every point he deserves on his written work. Share these tips with your teen:

- **Slow down.** He'll catch more errors.
- **Read aloud.** Sometimes the ear hears what the eye skips over.
- **Self-check.** He should double-check for the types of errors he knows he makes often, like forgetting to close quotes.

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