

Secrets to HIGH SCHOOL SUCCESS

Your high schooler probably has a lot to juggle: challenging classes, extracurricular activities, friends, family commitments, and possibly a part-time job. How can he thrive in school?

Knowing how to get organized, manage his time, and study efficiently can help him do his best. Share these strategies to help your child succeed in high school.

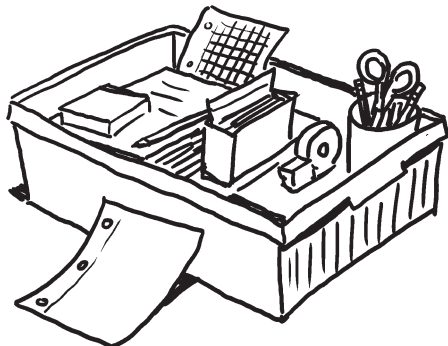


ORGANIZATION

Being organized lets your teen be more productive, because she'll have what she needs when she needs it. Suggest that she try these ideas.

Create a workspace. Your child should have a comfortable place to work that's well lit and free from distractions. It's best if she finds a place she can dedicate to schoolwork so she starts associating it with getting things done. She may be better off working at a desk in her room or at the kitchen table rather than on her bed or the couch by the TV. Wherever she works, she needs room to spread out materials. *Hint:* Cleaning out her workspace on occasion (say, once a month) can help her stay organized.

Stock supplies. Keeping graph paper, index cards, highlighters, and other supplies on hand will help your teenager stay on task—he won't have to stop what he's doing to search for them. At the beginning of the school year or semester, suggest that he inventory what he has and make a list of what he needs to buy or find



around the house. As the year continues, he should keep an eye on what's getting low.

If your child works in a common space like the dining room table, he might want to make a portable supply kit. He could fill a plastic tote or shoebox with his supplies. Then, each day when he's finished, he should put everything away.

Sort papers. Multiple classes mean several sets of books and notebooks, only some of which need to come home on any given day. Your high schooler can keep track by using separate color-coded materials for each class so she can easily spot history (red binder and folder) or calculus (blue binder and folder). *Hint:* Using loose-leaf binders for notes and handouts instead of spiral notebooks makes it easier to move or add papers.



Each week, your child should sort papers from the week before. She can file them in binders or folders. *Tip:* Having a three-hole punch nearby can make this task easier.

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TIME MANAGEMENT

Knowing what's on her agenda will give your teen a sense of control and help prevent stress. It can also ensure that she has time for everything from schoolwork to socializing. Here are some tips to help her get a handle on her day.

Keep calendars and to-do lists. Your child needs to see how much time she has and how she uses it. Suggest that she use a daily planner to schedule her time in half-hour increments and keep the planner with her at school so she can update it with assignments, tests, and due dates.

Also, reviewing her planner each night or in the morning will prepare her for the day ahead. She could transfer big items to a master calendar on her bulletin board or wall so she can see them at a glance. She can also use sticky notes on mirrors or dressers for reminders.

Schedule study time. Encourage your high schooler to set aside specific times to study, picking periods when he's more alert. *Idea:* Have him experiment with different times and see what works best. Also, he should plan short breaks (maybe a 10-minute walk around the block after a 50-minute study session). Have him review his schedule weekly—he may need to make adjustments for evening activities or work.

To get the most from his day, your teen should also take advantage of free time in his schedule. During study hall, between school and sports practice or club meetings, or while riding in the car, he can review notes, study vocabulary, or go over end-of-chapter questions.

Overcome time wasters.

Help your child learn to say "no" to distractions that can throw her off track. Say a friend calls to ask her to go to the mall when she's supposed to be researching a science project. She can simply say, "Today's not good. How about Thursday?"



Have her turn off her cell phone completely and stay off Facebook or instant-messaging sites when she's doing homework or studying. That way, she won't be tempted to check a vibrating phone or a beeping computer.



Avoid procrastination. If your teen has a tendency to procrastinate, suggest that he tell himself things like, "Do it now, and I can have a fun weekend."

He can also set a timer for 10 minutes and start on something he doesn't want to do, telling himself he can stop

when the time is up. Odds are, he'll probably get into the project and keep going.

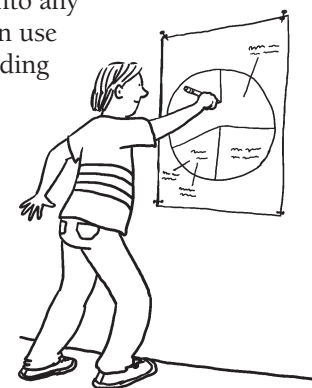
STUDYING

Good study skills help your high schooler be efficient so he can get the most out of what he learns in school in the least amount of time. Smart students know secrets like these.

Start at school. Studying doesn't begin when your teen sits down at home to do his work—it starts when he's in school each day. Being in class, listening, taking good notes, and participating in discussions are a big boon to your child's learning. Then, when he reviews at home, it's the second time he's seeing the material, making it easier to remember.

Stay focused. Study time doesn't benefit your teenager if her mind wanders. She can learn to stay focused with some simple techniques. For instance, she might notice a stray thought and remind herself, "Be here now," or she could visualize the thought in her mind and "watch" it float away. Getting enough sleep and eating nutritious foods (fruit, vegetables, protein) can also help your teen focus, since they fuel her body and boost brainpower.

Shape information. Working with information is like molding clay on a pottery wheel. Your high schooler can take the material and shape it into any form that makes sense so he can use it. When reviewing notes or reading his textbook, he might create charts, graphs, or drawings so data is visual and easy to digest (for example, a chart of survey results or a picture demonstrating a math formula). Or he can pull out crucial points and make study sheets for quick review.



High School Years

Planning for College



From the moment your high schooler thinks about attending college, questions fill your mind. Where do you start? How involved should you be in the planning?

We've compiled a year-by-year guide to help you manage the process and put your teen on the right path.

Freshman year

Your child's first year of high school is the ideal time to start talking about college. Two important college-planning items are on the list for the freshman year: choosing the right courses and getting involved in activities outside of class.

Planning a schedule

Your teen should ask his school counselor for help in picking classes with college in mind. Colleges look for four years of English; three to four years of math, lab science, and social studies; and at least two years of the same foreign language. Most recommend one or two semesters of arts courses. *Idea:* Your high schooler can use some of his electives to explore subjects that he might consider majoring in (psychology, economics).

Choosing extracurriculars

Colleges like to see your child become involved outside the classroom and take a leadership role in one or more areas. Encourage her to join after-school activities (French club, newspaper, sports teams), take part in competitions (science fair, debate team), and perform community service (Habitat for Humanity, tutoring underprivileged children). *Tip:* Suggest that she keep a file of her extracurriculars, including dates she participates and specific responsibilities and accomplishments for each one.

Sophomore year

What are college entrance exams like? What kinds of colleges are out there? Your teen can use the second year of high school to start gathering this information.

Taking the PSAT

The PSAT, given in October, is a good way for your college-bound teen to start his sophomore year. Although not required, it will help him prepare for the SAT. *Idea:* Suggest that he look online at www.collegeboard.org for more information.



Learning about colleges

This year is also a good time to start attending college fairs. Encourage your child to ask her school counselor for a schedule or to check www.nacacnet.org. These events will give her some ideas about the kinds of schools she might like—and they can get her excited about continuing her education.

Junior year

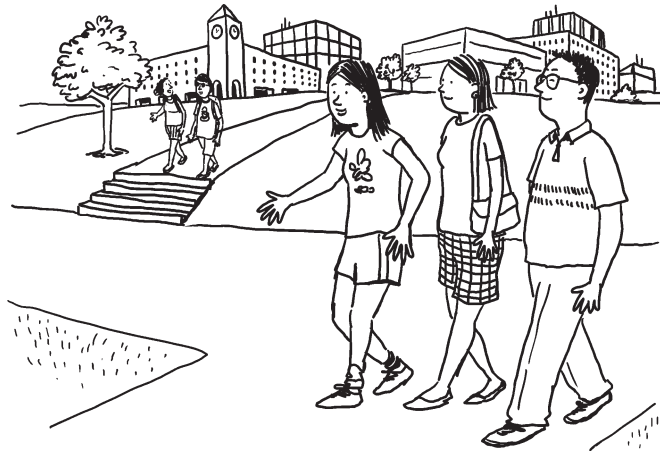
College planning really takes off this year. Juniors should focus on grades and preparing for college entrance exams. This is also the time for teens to look for schools and narrow their choices.

Choosing a college

Talk to your child about her ideal college. Does she prefer a small or large school? A community college or a four-year university? She should also consider distance from home and cost. Keep in mind that in-state public schools may have a cheaper price tag than out-of-state or private schools—but private schools may offer more generous financial aid.

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Once your teen has defined the kinds of schools she might like, she can ask her counselor for suggestions, browse school websites, and choose a few to visit in person. Try to go while the college is in session, and arrange guided tours ahead of time. A large part of choosing a school has to do with simple “chemistry”—whether your child feels that the college is a good fit for her and she can see herself there.



Your teenager’s list should include several “target schools” (ones that match her grades and test scores), several “reach schools” (slightly more challenging), and several “safety schools” (likely to admit her). Her backups should be places she would be happy attending, since top choices don’t always come through.

Taking entrance exams

Suggest that your teen check to see if the colleges he likes require students to take the ACT (www.act.org) or SAT (www.collegeboard.org). Then, he should register to take one or both tests during junior year. *Note:* Taking the test in winter or early spring gives him time to retake it at the end of junior year or early in senior year if he wants to try to raise his score.

Tip: Admissions applications may be available on college websites as early as July 1. Encourage your child to start on them in the summer when she isn’t busy with schoolwork.

Senior year

In the fall of senior year, your high schooler should be finishing up his college applications. Then, later in senior year it’s time to apply for financial aid. Suggest that he set up a calendar with deadlines so he can make sure everything is done on time.

Submitting applications



First, your child will need to fill out the application required by each school (either the school’s own application or the Common Application, which is used by more than 400 colleges). Then, he will have to arrange for his high

school to send his transcripts and the testing agency to send his SAT or ACT scores to the colleges he’s applying to. In addition, he’ll need to ask for letters of recommendation from adults who know him well (teachers, coaches)—and supply each person with a stamped envelope addressed to each college.

Another important part of the application is the essay. Students are often asked to explain their reasons for wanting to attend the college or to answer a question or express an opinion. This is the chance for your teen to show a school how he stands out from the crowd. Colleges want to see how well he can write and express himself and also to learn something about his personality. Remind your child to proofread his essay for clarity and for grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors.

Note: How quickly your teen receives a school’s decision letter will depend on the kind of enrollment it has. Rolling admissions means a school evaluates and decides on students as applications come in. Other schools wait and release their decisions all at once in the spring.

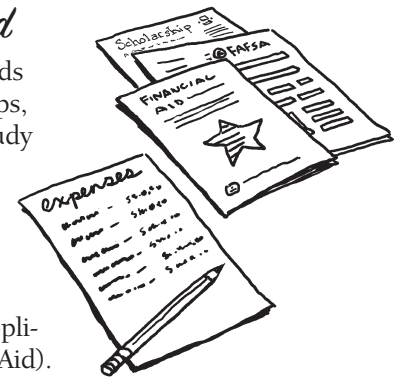
Getting financial aid

There are four basic kinds of financial aid: scholarships, loans, grants, and work-study (payment for jobs that students have while in college).

To be considered for aid, you or your teen must fill out the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). The form is available in high school guidance offices, in college financial aid offices, or at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Try to turn in the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1. Encourage your teenager to check with each college to find out if they require any additional forms. Also, don’t assume she won’t qualify for aid—almost half of all students get some form of help.

Tip: It’s important for you and your child to talk honestly about costs. How much can you contribute to her expenses, including tuition, room and board, books, supplies, gas, car insurance, and personal items? How much do you expect her to pay?



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