

October 2019

High School **YEARS**

Working Together for Lifelong Success



Short Clips

College financial aid

If your teenager is heading to college next fall, it's time to think about financial aid. The 2020–21 Free Application for Federal Student Aid is available starting this month at fafsa.gov and on the myStudentAid mobile app. *Tip:* Apply as soon as possible to get the most amount of aid your student qualifies for.

Good question!

Asking questions in class helps your high schooler learn more. If he's hesitant about raising his hand, suggest that he first write down his question so he feels more confident. If he doesn't have time to ask all of his questions, he could approach the teacher after class.

DID YOU KNOW?

Sugar can be addictive—the more your teen consumes, the more she'll crave. To break the cycle, encourage her to drink water and fat-free milk rather than soda or energy drinks. Also, suggest that she eat fresh fruit rather than drink fruit juice and choose plain yogurt instead of sweetened yogurt.

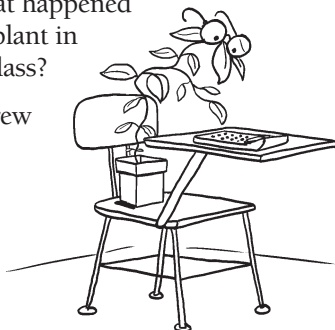
Worth quoting

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started." *Mark Twain*

Just for fun

Q: What happened to the plant in math class?

A: It grew square roots!



Getting your teen to *really* talk to you

Sometimes it may be hard to believe, but teenagers want to talk to their parents about their lives. And those who do are more likely to succeed in school and resist risky behaviors. Try these ideas to encourage your teen to open up.



Get his opinion

High schoolers have their own opinions about many issues. Get your teenager's thoughts on a newspaper article, how he feels about Meatless Monday, or who he thinks will make the football playoffs. Be sure to listen carefully to his responses—he'll see that his opinion is important to you.

Offer undivided attention

Regular one-on-one time lets your teen talk to you privately without worrying about others listening. You might walk the dogs together every night or cook pancakes on Sundays before everyone else wakes up. Other ideas include shooting the breeze while you shoot

hoops or dropping by his room to say good night. Make it routine so he knows that's when he can bring up anything that's bothering him—or just chat.

Keep him talking

If your high schooler makes a comment that concerns you ("That party got crazy!") and then shuts down, don't rush to fill the silence. He may need time to figure out what to say. If he doesn't continue, ask questions that help him tell the story but don't sound like an interrogation. ("It was his birthday, right?" instead of "Was there alcohol?")

Goal for it!

Academic goals help your busy high schooler focus on what matters the most. Share this advice for setting goals.

■ **Be specific and realistic.** Your teenager is more apt to meet a goal like "I will get an A on my next algebra test" rather than "I will ace algebra this semester!" Or instead of a general goal ("I will be more organized"), she might concentrate on updating her planner daily.

■ **Make a plan.** Your child should decide what she'll do to reach each goal, such as starting a study group or packing her planner every day.

Idea: Suggest that she write and display each goal on a separate slip of colored paper. 👍



The “write” angle

Has your high schooler been assigned a research paper? The hardest part might be getting started. Suggest these steps.

1. Narrow it down. Maybe your teen’s assigned topic involves Shakespeare’s plays or the environment. Encourage her to set a timer for five minutes and free-write about the subject. (“Shakespeare used unusual language. Does anyone still talk that way? I’ve heard phrases from his plays in songs.”) She might decide that her angle is “Shakespeare’s Language Today.” Or suggest that she list related words—for the environment, she



could jot down *pollution, oceans, plastic bags, and recycling*. The list may lead her to her angle, perhaps “The Effects of Plastic Bags on Oceans.”

2. Choose your thesis. A thesis is what your teenager’s paper will demonstrate or support. She should be sure it’s something she can back up with

research. Have her write a statement based on the angle she picked. *Examples:* “People believe Shakespeare’s language is ‘dead,’ but it appears in modern culture” or “Banning plastic bags will make oceans healthier.” *Note:* She may need to revise her thesis as she does research. 👍



Q & A Safer on the road

Q My son just got his driver’s license. As a parent, what can I do to keep him safer on the road?

A You’ve probably talked to him about wearing his seatbelt, never drinking, and not texting and driving. But the leading cause of fatal car accidents among teenagers is inexperience. It takes time, judgment, and skill to drive safely.

The best thing to do is to spend time in the car with your son. When you’re the passenger, point out what he does right (“That was smart to yield there”)

and wrong (“Always use your turn signal”). When you’re driving,

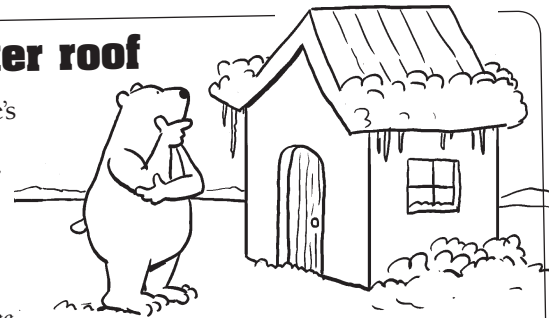
model and explain safe habits (keeping a safe distance between cars, slowing down in bad weather).

Nighttime driving presents extra challenges for young drivers, so consider limiting his privileges for now. And since friends are often distracting in the car, you might set rules about that as well (no passengers other than family). 👍



Engineering a better roof

Ask your teenager to imagine he’s an engineer designing a house in the Arctic. How would he engineer a roof to handle the heavy snow loads? This activity can help him decide.



Materials: internet or books, three shoeboxes, scissors, tape, poster board or cardboard, flour, measuring cup

Have your teen look online or in books for roofs used in various parts of the world. Now he could use poster board or cardboard and tape to make a different type of roof for each shoebox, perhaps flat, curved, or slanted. To test each design, he should slowly sprinkle 1 cup flour (“snow”) onto each roof. Does the snow build up or slide off? Does the roof sag or collapse? Which design works best?

Encourage him to think about other climates and create new models to withstand those weather conditions. Which roof shape would work best for strong winds? Heavy rains? Suggest that he experiment to test his predictions. 👍

Parent to Parent Friendship matters

Like me, my daughter Jayla can be shy, so it’s not always easy for her to make friends. But her counselor told me that teenagers have better attitudes about school and do better when they have good friends there. That’s because they feel more connected—like they belong.

I mentioned this to Jayla, and we discussed what a “good friend” is.

Jayla said it’s someone who is loyal and fun to be with. Then, we brainstormed ways to make friends. She loves science and photography, so we decided to check the school website for clubs she could join. I also told her that she’s free to invite classmates home to study or hang out.

And we both agreed to try to talk to more new people. Jayla now has new friends at school, and I have some at work, too! 👍



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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