

September 2009

# High School YEARS

Working together for lifelong success

## Short Clips



### School activities

An extracurricular activity will improve your child's skills in a fun environment. For instance, the French club can boost fluency, and the debate team can strengthen writing and critical-thinking abilities. Suggest that your child attend his school's activity fair or talk to the club adviser for details.

### Text me

Teens seem to text-message more than they talk on their cell phones these days. Meet your child on her own turf by texting her to arrange rides home or to check in when she's with friends. *Note:* Make sure you follow your school's policy about texting during the school day.

### "It was so funny..."

Encourage laughter in your home with a family comedy journal. Jot down funny events in a small notebook. *Example:* "Billy tried to get into a car that looked like ours, but it belonged to someone else!" Keep the journal on a shelf or table where family members can read it when they need a laugh.

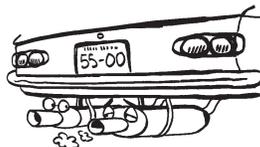
### Worth quoting

"If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders."  
*Abigail Van Buren*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What did one car muffler say to the other car muffler?

**A:** I'm exhausted!



## Study from the start

Good study habits can set the stage for a successful school year. Use these tips to help your child be prepared to study.

**Time it right.** Have your teen build regular study sessions into his schedule. This will help him avoid cramming for tests, and he'll be ready for pop quizzes. Encourage him to write all his obligations in his planner ("Football practice, Monday–Thursday, 2:30–4:30"). Then he can add time slots for studying.

**Make it fun.** Suggest that your teenager and a "study buddy" take turns making up tests for each other or go over review questions together. Computers also offer helpful study methods. Your child can create an online quiz based on his class notes (try [www.proprofs.com/quizschool](http://www.proprofs.com/quizschool) or [www.easytestmaker.com](http://www.easytestmaker.com)).

**Avoid distractions.** Research shows that students can't give their full



attention to studying when they're doing several other things at the same time. Have your child study in a quiet spot away from his computer. That way, he won't be tempted by e-mail, Facebook, or instant messaging—and he may find that he finishes his work faster and is more productive.

**Create incentives.** Encourage your high schooler to reward himself for hard work. After spending a solid hour studying for a big test or writing a research paper, he could take 15 minutes to ride his bike or play with his dog. 👍

## Time for reading

Leisure reading can build vocabulary and comprehension skills. Motivate your teen with these ideas:

- Reading at bedtime is a good way to unwind after a long day. Suggest that she keep a variety of materials next to her bed, including novels, magazines, and comic books.
- Your high schooler isn't too old to be read to. Casually share interesting news articles, quotations, and movie or book reviews that you come across.
- Go to the library regularly as a family. Encourage your teen to browse through the different sections. She may enjoy biographies, history, or nature, for example. 👍



## Staying sober

High schoolers often face pressure to drink alcohol. How they handle it may depend on what they know. Share these myths and facts with your teen.

**Myth:** Beer is safer than liquor.

**Fact:** A beer has as much alcohol as a shot of liquor. And drinks like “hard” lemonade contain just as much or more. Be clear with your child—all alcohol is illegal for teenagers and interferes with coordination and judgment.

**Myth:** Alcohol can't kill.

**Fact:** Alcohol poisoning can cause vomiting, seizures, and death. Since everyone's different, your teen can't know how much will be deadly. Encourage her



to plan alcohol-free activities like miniature golf and laser tag.

**Myth:** Young people can safely drink a small amount of alcohol.

**Fact:** People who start drinking when they're teens are more likely to become alcoholics. And since young brains are still developing, drinking can cause permanent learning problems. Make it a rule that your teen can't go to houses where underage drinking is allowed.

**Tip:** The most important thing you can do is talk with your child about drinking. Consider signing a contract in which she agrees not to drink and never to drive under the influence or ride with an impaired driver. And you agree to provide a sober ride home and to talk about what happened when you are both calm. Use the agreement at [www.sadd.org/contract.htm](http://www.sadd.org/contract.htm), or create your own. 👍



## Kindness counts

Teach your child everyday ways to practice kindness with these ideas:

- Look for small opportunities to make a difference. Your teen might babysit a sibling or mow the next-door neighbor's yard.
- Write thank-you notes. Encourage your child to put his thanks in writing when a teacher, coach, or another parent goes out of the way for him.



- Ask about others. Explain to your teen that questions such as “How was work?” or “What's new?” let people know that he cares about them. Set an example by asking your spouse and your high schooler about their day.
- Find ways to help friends. For instance, he could listen to a friend's problem or share class notes with someone who was absent. 👍

## Q & A After-school job

**Q** My daughter needs a part-time job to earn spending money. What jobs will fit in best with a high schooler's schedule?

**A** Your child will want to look for a place that is used to hiring students and is understanding about their schedules. After all, school is your teen's most important job.

A day-care center, for instance, may need help after school. Since most centers close around dinnertime, your daughter could have the rest of her evening free. Gyms and dance studios sometimes hire high schoolers to teach younger children, and they may allow her to do homework between classes. And movie theaters, grocery stores, and restaurants will probably offer weekend hours.

Together, talk about days and times your teen can work. For example, you might limit her to 10–15 hours a week. Remind her to be honest with employers about her availability when she applies. Also, she may want to ask for a more flexible schedule during exam time. 👍



## Parent to Parent Paying for college

Our son Reid wants to go to college, but we haven't saved much money. After talking to his guidance counselor, we discovered that we may be able to get some financial aid.

She said that families at all income levels should fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA. It will determine whether we're eligible for federal grants and loans, and it's also used by some states and universities to award aid.

She told us we should complete it as soon as possible after January 1 of Reid's senior year, since some money is given out on a first-come, first-served basis. (Editor's Note: Check [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) for deadlines by state.)

The counselor also suggested that our son apply for private scholarships through my employer, other businesses, and community service organizations. She urged Reid to try for as many as possible—regardless of size—since small amounts do add up. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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