

Helping Students Learn[®]

HIGH SCHOOL

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School
Cumberland County Schools



October 2022

Strengthening time management skills helps students now and later

In high school, college and the workplace, your teen's time management skills will make the difference between meeting responsibilities and coming up short. They will also help your teen handle competing priorities and lead a less stressful life. Most high school students are still developing these critical skills. Share these effective strategies with your teen:

- **Write everything down.** Your teen should put all assignments and commitments into a planner or calendar, then make a weekly schedule. Having everything in one place makes it easy to avoid conflicts and see how much time is really available.
- **Do a little every day.** Studying for 30 minutes a day for 10 days is more effective than trying to cram for five hours the night before a test.
- **Make the most of spare moments.** In just 10 minutes, your teen can skim a book chapter, complete a math problem or two, or learn three vocabulary words.
- **Build in catch-up time.** Suggest scheduling time once a week to take care of a task that your teen has been putting off. If your student is caught up, this is a good time to work ahead on something.
- **Tackle time wasters.** Help your teen identify non-essential activities that tend to eat up time, such as scrolling through videos, and plan ways to limit or avoid them.



Teach your teen what cheating means

Many high school students don't view cheating as a serious offense—but they are wrong. Explain to your teen that cheating is the same as lying and stealing. Cheaters are stealing someone else's work and lying by saying it is theirs. At the same time, they cheat themselves of the knowledge they'd gain from learning the material.

Connect STEM to the future

Teens often avoid the high school math and science classes that would help prepare them for a wide variety of jobs in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. To convince your teen of the value of these classes:



- **Discuss how STEM topics** relate to your student's interests. A teen who loves phone apps may want to take computer science and develop some new ones.
- **Browse in-demand** STEM careers together at www.napequity.org/stemcareers.



Create a framework for healthy sleep

Getting enough sleep at night helps students be alert in class the next day. And research shows that it's also important to get a good night's rest after a day of learning—learning continues to take place while your teen sleeps.

The natural rhythm of teens is to stay up late at night, and they may struggle to wake up in time for early classes. To help your teen start school rested and ready to learn:

- **Work together on** a schedule that allows your student time to complete schoolwork and sleep.
- **Establish a routine.** Help your teen stick to a set bedtime. Dimming the lights and avoiding

screen use right before bedtime can make getting to sleep easier.

- **Limit sleeping in** on weekends. Sleeping more than two hours later makes it harder to go back to rising early on Monday.
- **Encourage exercise.** Working out, running and other activities—at least a few hours before bed—will help your teen sleep soundly.

Source: E. Suni, "Teens and Sleep," Sleep Foundation.

Instill accountability

Responsible students do more than turn work in on time. They also think ahead and consider how their actions will affect themselves and others. They are accountable for what they do. Talk with your teen about the importance of:

- **Keeping promises** so people know they can count on your teen to follow through.
- **Admitting errors** and making amends.
- **Accepting consequences.** Accountable students don't blame others. They learn from their results and avoid making the same mistake again.





How can I help my teen keep college prep in balance?

Q: My 11th grader is trying to do it all: advanced classes, playing two sports, working a part-time job and volunteering. My teen says this is all necessary to get into college. I'm worried it's too much to do well. What should I do?

A: Your teen is taking important steps toward independence: setting priorities and making choices. The competition for college admission is more demanding at some schools than others. Your student should research the expectations of schools of interest. Then, to find a balance that works, consider these questions together:



- **Is your teen keeping up** with schoolwork? Remind your student that this is the first priority. Colleges care most that students get good grades in rigorous courses. If grades start to slip, brainstorm together about changes your teen can make. Some activities may have to go.
- **Does your teen care** about these extracurricular activities? Colleges are interested in seeing growth, leadership and a connection between students' activities and their passions. They aren't looking for students who plod through activities they don't like just to pad their applications.
- **Does your student have** any downtime? All teens need a little unscheduled time each week to relax, hang out with family and friends and daydream.



Are you helping your teen value effort?

Every teen is capable of achieving "personal bests." Effort is what makes them happen. Are you helping your teen feel motivated to strive and work hard in school? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you praise** your teen's positive work habits? "You've gotten off to a strong start on your research project by beginning early."
- ___ **2. Do you celebrate** the progress your teen makes?
- ___ **3. Do you avoid** focusing too much on final results when you see your teen trying hard?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your teen to take pride in having a strong work ethic? "It must feel great to know you did everything you could."

- ___ **5. Do you set** an example by putting consistent and diligent effort into your own work?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are encouraging your teen's best efforts in school. For each no, try that idea.

"Always do your very best. Even when no one else is looking, you always are. Don't disappoint yourself."

—Colin Powell

Insist on respectful behavior

When you ask your teen to do something, are rolling eyes the first response you get? Does your teen use a tone of voice that you would have been grounded for using on your parents? To address disrespect:

- **Model respectful behavior.**
- **Make it clear** that having strong feelings is OK, but using a disrespectful tone or foul language isn't.
- **Set boundaries** and enforce consequences calmly and consistently.

Meet your teen's counselor

Touching base each year with your teen's school counselor is a smart way to ensure that your student stays on track to graduate. Counselors follow students' progress through high school. They are helpful guides to everything from choosing classes that meet students' goals to college admissions to problem-solving about common teen obstacles—both academic and not. Meet early in the year to allow the counselor time to get to know and work with your teen.

Encourage daily goal setting

The world is going through big changes. High school students are, too. Here's a daily routine that can help your teen focus on what's important. Each morning, ask your student to set three goals for the day. Think of them as the Three S's:

- 1. School.** What's the most important thing your teen can do today for school? It might be study for a big test or write a paper.
- 2. Self.** What will your teen do to ensure personal well-being? Exercise? Journal?
- 3. Someone else.** How could your teen help another person? Reach out to a new student? Volunteer in the community?

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