

# Get Organized!

*When it comes to being a successful student, being organized can make all the difference! Research shows that students who are organized do better in school and don't get as frustrated during daily routines. These tips on organization and time management will help your teen stay on top of schoolwork and homework.*

## Prepare the night before

Have your teenager establish nighttime routines that make mornings go smoothly. She can choose her clothes and set out her backpack, coat, and other items she'll need. *Tip:* Hang wall pegs or place a basket by the door to hold her things. Your teen can even get her breakfast ready by putting a bowl, cereal box, banana, and spoon on the kitchen table. Remind her that the more she does the night before, the easier her mornings will be.

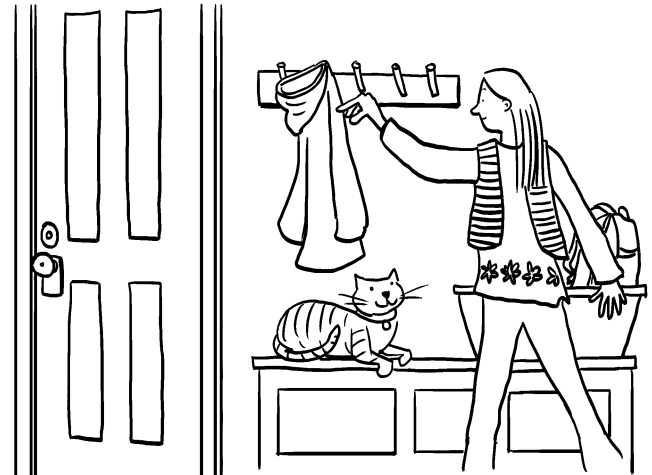
## Plan for short term and long term

Talk about the upcoming month with your high schooler. What assignments are due? When will he do homework, chores, and extracurriculars? Let him write everything in a planner or on a calendar. Then, schedule Sunday meetings to review the week ahead together. Arrange rides for activities, check on games and school events, go over after-school appointments, and get commitments for family meals. Also, tell your child if you'll be out any evenings. Discussing the week keeps teens on track and parents informed.

## Create a homework spot

Help your high schooler choose a quiet place with plenty of light, such as her bedroom desk or the dining room table. Make sure she turns off her phone or keeps it in another room to avoid distractions. She might stock a cardboard box or plastic tote with school supplies like pens, highlighters, a calculator,

and reference books (dictionary, thesaurus). It's also a good idea to include a stapler and paper clips for holding papers together.



## Ready, set, declutter!

For an organization activity the whole family can try, make a game out of "decluttering" your house. Set a timer for 10 minutes, and see who finds the most things to throw away before it rings. Check easily cluttered spaces like counters and backpacks.

## Maintain a clean locker

An organized locker will let your high schooler locate supplies quickly between classes. For instance, he could store books and folders for morning classes on the top shelf and afternoon materials on the bottom. Also, suggest putting extra pens, pencils, and calculator batteries in a pouch inside his locker.



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## Stay ahead

By doing a little at a time, your child can stay on top of her tasks. For example, she could start her reading for English class while waiting for a ride after STEM club. Or she might take 15 minutes a day to review her class notes. Even if she doesn't have homework for a certain subject, she will keep what she learned fresh in her mind.

## Set priorities

Suggest that your teen keep a to-do list and rank items in order of urgency. Tasks that he labels with an "A" must be done immediately (homework due tomorrow). He should take care of "B" items as soon as possible (wash uniform for

this weekend's game). And he can do those marked "C" when it's convenient (organize his photographs). This method will teach him to focus on what matters most.

## Keep track of papers

Encourage your teenager to choose a different-colored notebook and matching folder for each subject. She can use notebooks to take class notes and folders to store returned assignments, quizzes, and tests. When it's time for class or homework, she'll know at a glance which folders and notebooks to grab. *Tip:* It's a good idea to have a new folder on her computer for each school year, along with a subfolder for each subject. Make sure she backs up her files regularly.

## Don't get sidetracked

With so much going on in your teen's life, he may be tempted by activities that aren't on his list. Encourage him to take care of obligations first so he's not crunched for time later. You might help him practice what to say to friends who ask him to hang out when he has work to do.

*Example:* "No, I'm heading to the library. How about doing something Saturday instead?"



## Project planning

Organization is an important key to success when your teen works on a group project. Suggest these ideas for getting started:

- Get everyone's phone number and email address. Group members might put the numbers in their cell phones or write email addresses in their assignment books. Or one person can start a group email chain to share contact information.
- Create a shared folder using a free program (for example, Dropbox or Google Drive). Everyone in the group will have access to the files they need.
- At the first meeting, go over the project. Discuss ideas for



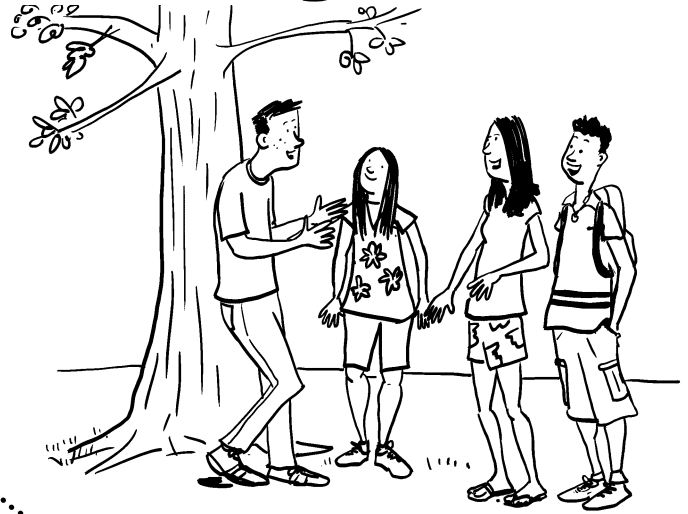
the format (poster, video, debate), and decide on one that everybody thinks will work best.

- Have each team member volunteer for a task (research a section, design a brochure, write a script). Agree on due dates for each job. *Idea:* Set up an online calendar that will notify everyone about upcoming deadlines, or put someone in charge of sending out reminders.
- Decide where and when the group will meet (say, at the library, Thursdays after school). Or if they will have video conferences or group calls, decide on a time and a meeting leader.

## High School Years

# Avoiding Risky Behaviors

The high school years give you a glimpse of the young adult your child is becoming. They also bring new challenges in keeping him safe. Here are ways you can help your teen avoid dangerous substances, be a safe driver, and have healthy dating relationships.



## Prevent drug use

One of the best ways to prevent your children from experimenting with alcohol and other drugs is to talk about the subject.



■ **Risks.** Ask what they know about drugs, and make it clear you don't want them trying any. Point out that using drugs at this age is especially harmful because their brains and bodies are still growing.

Also, focus on risks that will matter to *them*. For example, your teen could be kicked off a sports team or get a bad reputation.

■ **Parties.** If there's a party, check with the parents ahead of time. Make sure the teens will be supervised and that alcohol won't be served. If you're uncertain whether a party will be safe, say no and offer an alternative, like letting your child have friends over.

■ **Saying no.** Go over ways to turn down alcohol or drugs. Your teen might simply say "No, thanks," use humor ("I don't look good in handcuffs"), or use you or school as an excuse ("My parents would ground me forever" or "I have a paper to write").

## Be aware of drugs

Different drugs are popular in different places. To learn what's common where you live, ask local police or school administrators what they see. Watch for substances like these.

■ **Alcohol.** People who start drinking at a younger age have a greater chance of becoming addicted. Keep an eye on alcohol if you have it at home (for instance, check the levels in liquor bottles). Better yet, lock it up.

■ **Nicotine.** While smoking is on the decline among young people, e-cigarettes are gaining popularity. And using e-cigs to inhale nicotine-based vapor can get young people hooked. Let your high schooler know these devices are off-limits.

■ **Marijuana.** Surveys show that adolescents don't see as much of a risk in using "weed" as they used to. Explain to your teen that marijuana carries special risks for adolescent brains. For instance, it's been shown to damage attention and memory, making it harder to learn.

### ■ Prescription drugs.

Teenagers might use medications like painkillers, tranquilizers, antidepressants, sleeping pills, or stimulants (like ADHD medicines), thinking they aren't as dangerous as "regular" drugs. Tell your child it's illegal to use someone else's prescription and that doing so can be addictive and deadly. Get rid of unused medications, or lock them in cabinets.



■ **Heroin.** Adolescents who become addicted to prescription drugs may turn to heroin because it's cheaper and easier to get. Explain to your teen that using heroin is extremely dangerous, and it's a vicious cycle. Withdrawal symptoms are severe, leading the user to seek more heroin to feel better.

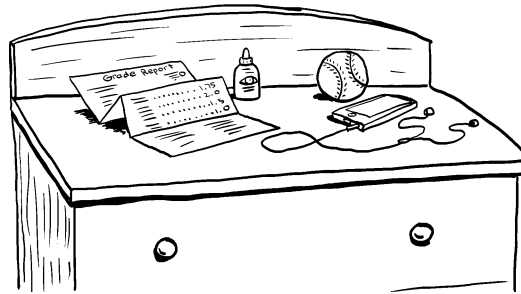
*Note:* Become familiar with drug-related slang by checking sites like [noslang.com/drugs](http://noslang.com/drugs). Keep an eye on your child's texts and social media posts for drug terms.

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## Drugs: Warning signs

Symptoms vary by drug, but below are common ones. Since some are typical teen behaviors, you'll need to consider whether they continue longer than normal or whether two or more are happening together. Look for:

- Withdrawing from family, friends, and activities
- Significant drop in grades
- Unusual tiredness or energy
- Unexplained nausea or vomiting
- Red or flushed face
- Skin irritations or bruises
- Frequent nosebleeds or runny nose
- Excessive thirst
- Increased use of eyedrops (to reduce redness)



- Sudden use of air fresheners, scented candles, or incense (to cover up drug, cigarette, or alcohol odor)
- Unusual activity regarding money (frequently asking for money, selling personal belongings, stealing)

If you suspect your child is using drugs, check with teachers to see if they've noticed anything unusual. Ask your teen directly, and let her know you care about her safety and want to get her help. If she denies using them but symptoms continue, take her to the doctor for a medical opinion. You can also call the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids helpline (855-378-4373).

## Encourage safe driving

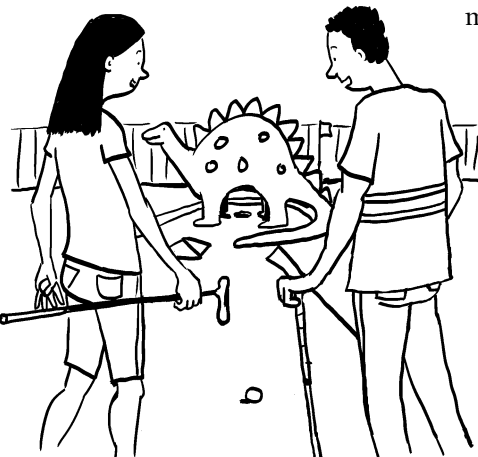
Teen drivers are more likely than other age groups to get into accidents. Make your child safer behind the wheel by practicing in different conditions at different times (rain, snow, dawn, dusk) and in different places (side streets, highways, parking lots). Point out strategies that work for each situation. For instance, bright sun can blind your sight temporarily, so wear sunglasses and keep the visor down. In rain or snow, drive more slowly and leave extra room between cars.

Start your teen out slowly once he gets his license. You might allow him to drive only to school and work at first. Over time, perhaps he could drive farther away. Also, even if state law doesn't limit passengers for teen drivers, consider not allowing friends in the car—they can be distracting and may encourage showing off.

Let your teenager know that driving provides freedom but comes with responsibility. That means following ground rules like wearing a seat belt on every trip (no matter how short), never texting while driving, and obeying the speed limit and other laws. Consider putting teeth into those responsibilities, too. You might require your teen to pay for any tickets he gets, damage from any accidents he causes, and additional insurance costs.



## Promote healthy dating



Your high schooler may or may not be dating yet—either way, talk about healthy relationships. Discuss how one should be treated and should treat a partner. For instance, partners should respect each other and give

each other time with family and friends. They should also share decision making or be willing to compromise. If partners try to change each other, limit one another's time for outside interests, or insist on making all the decisions, the relationship is out of balance.

Sadly, teen dating violence is all too common. Explain that under no circumstances should your child or a date hurt each other physically, call one another names, or force sexual activity. Let your teens know they can come to you or another trusted adult if they ever think a partner is abusive.

Talking to your teenagers about sex will also help protect them. Explain your views, and listen to theirs. Tell them you're willing to answer questions and that you plan to bring up the subject again.

## High School Years

# Real-Life Advice from Real Grads

*Should I apply to college? What's it like being away from home? What should I expect at my first job? Teenagers face many questions about their future. So who better to answer those questions than recent high school graduates? Share the following Q&As with your teen to help him prepare for this important time.*



**Q** *I'm getting ready to apply to college. What are some things you wish you had known before starting the process?*

**A** Start early, and know yourself! Even before you see your first application, you know what your accomplishments are and what makes you special, so begin writing those items down in a file now. It will be valuable to have them already collected when it comes time to communicate



your strengths to colleges. And knowing yourself also means being realistic about where you apply. Think carefully about your application list early, and you'll save time and reduce stress later.

**Q** *I have no idea what I want to study, so should I even go to college yet?*

**A** Knowing what you want to study is not a requirement for going to college, and you're definitely not alone. The good news is you probably don't have to declare a major right away. Almost every school has a program for undecided freshmen, and taking introductory courses and exploring different fields can help you discover your true interests. You'll be assigned a college adviser who will help, too. And here's a little secret: Many freshmen who enter college with a major actually end up switching anyway.

**Q** *What were the biggest lessons you learned from your first semester in college?*

**A** All those naggy lessons your parents taught you turn out to be true! Get enough sleep, eat well, clean up after yourself, don't blow off your studies, and *do* hang out with the right people. Also, you don't have to be best friends with your roommate, so don't feel pressured. But you do have to be friendly. I think that really just means: Treat her how you would want to be treated, and try to be patient with her weird habits—you have yours, too. Then, get to know your professors. Go to office hours. They want to help you, and you may make valuable connections for internship and job references.



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**Q** *I'm afraid my first-choice major won't lead to a job. Did you choose your major based on making your college investment pay off, or based on what you liked?*

**A** It's obviously better to do something you love, and that you're good at, than to do something you don't like just so it "pays off." At the same time, you need to go into college with your eyes wide open about the job market. The key is not just in choosing your major, but in finding a way to make yourself marketable when you graduate. If you love history or music, consider pursuing an education degree so you could teach those subjects. If you have a passion for math, look into engineering programs. Then, no matter what you major in, take advantage of internships and other opportunities to make yourself an experienced job applicant when the time comes. Whether you're going into a field with more or fewer opportunities, having already worked in that field will give you a leg up.

**Q** *I'm starting college in the fall, and I need to work part-time. How can I balance school, work, and fun?*



**A** First of all, school, work, and fun don't have to be separate. Some on-campus jobs will be all three at once. For example, dorm mailroom positions let you meet

everyone, work with fellow students, and perhaps have downtime for studying. The same may be true for dining hall or rec center jobs. But as a working student, time management will be key. Work morning shifts on days you don't have class, or work weekends. Set up official homework times for yourself, and study in the library where there are fewer distractions. If you do those things, you'll be more relaxed when it's time for fun.

**Q** *I'm going right into the workforce. What surprised you about your first job?*

**A** A few things. At the top of the list: You have to learn to work with all different personalities, and you have to get along with everyone, whether or not you like them. That's something you could prepare for now by



digging into group projects in school, participating in sports, joining clubs, and volunteering. Also, you'll see that you're expected to get your work done on time—there aren't a lot of extensions or excuses. And you'll have to get used to the fact that work goes year-round—no more spring break or summer vacation. Sometimes the day feels long, but I've been surprised by how much I get done in an eight-hour day and how good that feeling of accomplishment can be.

**Q** *My finances will be tight. How did you keep expenses down and make your money go further while living independently?*

**A** Number one:

Create a budget.

You have to know how much is coming in and where it's going.

Then, watch your spending.

Stick to your meal plan—eating out can really add up.

Textbooks are

often a huge line item, so make sure you research alternatives. You might rent books, buy used ones, or check out neighborhood or online bookstores. Next, see if your school or community offers a student discount card to use at local shops. And for free entertainment, watch for on-campus events like movies, plays, concerts, and talks.



**Q** *I have to cook my own meals next year, and I've never made anything in my whole life! What tips do you have for preparing easy meals in a small kitchen?*

**A** Ask a parent or family friend for help while you're still living at home. You might cook alongside them and learn basic kitchen skills like chopping, slicing, and sauteing. And finding recipes couldn't be easier these days—you can search online for recipes-for-one, browse your favorite dishes on Pinterest, or get a "dorm room" cookbook. Don't worry about the size of the kitchen. Unless you're planning to throw lavish dinner parties (which you're not), any kitchen with a refrigerator, a stove, and an oven will meet your needs. Above all, enjoy it. Pick ingredients you like, be creative, and have fun.

## High School Years