

# TEN THINGS YOUR KIDS NEED TO GET RIGHT IN HIGH SCHOOL

(Adapted from allprodad.com)

High school isn't just about showing up. Attendance is critical, but it's only the first step. High school has the potential to be an opportunity-laden springboard to the rest of your child's life. No matter what the future holds, tomorrow can either be nurtured or sabotaged during those turbulent years known as "9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade."

So, what can parents do to help? Well, awareness is an important first step. We can't do it for them, but we can do a lot to help steer their way to success. Here are 10 things your kids need to get right in high school:

1. Relationships: In 9<sup>th</sup> grade, it's still tough to be an individual and get away with it. That's why, even if your kids have solid values, it's important that they surround themselves with the right friends. We're not saying they should be cliquish, or reject "the wrong kind of people." We're saying that your kids need to reach out from a position of strength.
2. Study habits: This is high school; there are no "do-overs" any more. Help your child think of school as their "job." Good study habits mean never having to play catch up. Never having to play catch up means more time for extra-curricular activities. Good study habits are a win-win.
3. Ownership: By the time college comes around, responsibility for your child's education has shifted to...your child. That's how it should be, but it takes the full four years of high school to get ready.
4. Delayed Gratification: We're talking long-term vs. short-term gratification. This includes things like:
  - Playing video games tonight vs. studying to pass the big English test.
  - Grabbing a snack at activity period vs. going to the math teacher for help.
  - Relaxing all weekend vs. getting a head start on studying for the semester exams that begin on Wednesday.
5. Dating: There can be tremendous pressure in high school to date, fool around, and "play the field." Making the wrong decisions about dating compromises relationships, causes long-term emotional damage, treats other people like objects, denies fundamental values, cheapens physical love, exposes teens to life-changing diseases, and sets in motion patterns of male/female interaction that they will still be dealing with decades into the future.
6. Curfew: Simple, but far-reaching. Trust breeds trust, and mistrust breeds mistrust. Work hard with your teen to establish reasonable expectations, and then quickly reinforce good choices with increased trust. The result will be self-policing that works far better than a more severe alternative.

7. Fun: Encourage your high-schooler to remember they're still a kid at heart! Good, clean fun is often forgotten in the midst of posturing, adult role-playing, part-time jobs, responsibilities, and the shift in focus that's necessary from grades 9-12. Church youth programs are often a great way to help with this.
8. Balance: Your child—and this is certainly related to the previous point—must enter the adult world with a sense of balance. Serious and fun. Study and play. Work and recreation. Dating and hanging out with the crowd. Restrictions and liberty.
9. Civics: By the time your high-schooler turns 18 their senior year, they should be ready to participate in politics, elections, etc. If there's one thing this nation needs right now from its young people, it's creative, enthusiastic participation in what it means to be a free American. Don't tell your child what to think...just make sure that they do.
10. Further education: Like it or not, further education, whether it is college, military service, or technical training, must be a part of the conversation from day one. No matter what they end up doing, it's critical that your teen have choices. The more prepared they are by 12<sup>th</sup> grade, the more choices there are. No one wants their career chosen for them because they wasted four years of preparation.