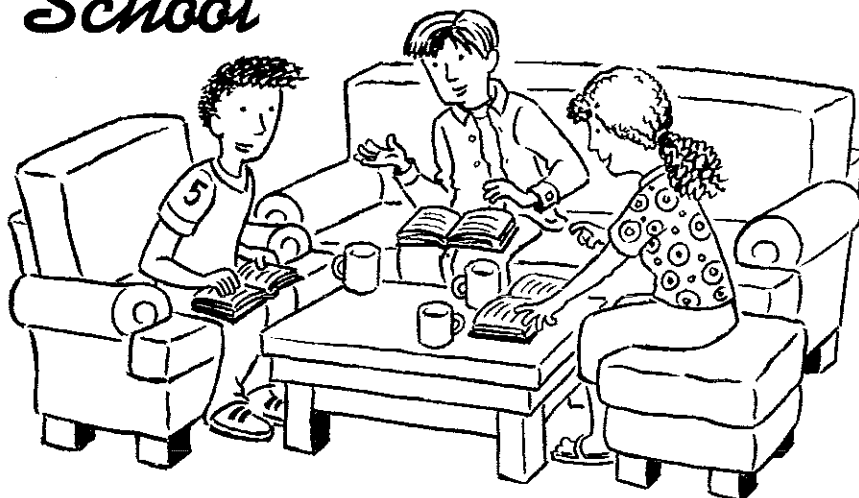


# Secrets to High School Reading and Writing



Reading and writing every day can help your teen do better on homework, tests, and projects. Here are suggestions for strengthening your child's skills and helping him enjoy reading and writing.

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## Reading

Good things happen when your teen reads! Reading can spark her imagination, build background knowledge, improve vocabulary, and sharpen critical-thinking skills.

### Schoolwork

- When your teenager reads textbooks, encourage her to preview the material first. She might look at chapter headings, bold lettering, charts, tables, photos, and diagrams. They can all provide clues to what the chapter is about before she begins her in-depth reading.
- Suggest that your child read review questions at the end of a chapter *before* reading the chapter. This will help her recognize important facts and main points as she reads.



- If your high schooler needs to do a research project, recommend that she check out more than one source from the library. Reading different points of view keeps things interesting and will help her understand the topic in more detail.

### Everyday reading

- Encourage your child to read newspapers and magazines. The articles can help her make connections between what she's learning in school and what's happening in the world. For example, when she reads about the president's trip to meet with leaders of the European Union, she will have more to add in history class when talking about World War II.
- Encourage reading everywhere you go. Take books to the doctor's office and on family outings. Go to libraries and used bookstores regularly. Stop in gift stores after a trip to the museum, and look through the books.
- Try to have your teen notice others in the family reading on a daily basis. You might let her overhear you talking to her younger sister about her bedtime book

or mention an interesting article you read that day. After dinner, make a point of reading in the family room for a little while.

### Reading for pleasure

- To find books he'll like, your child can ask friends, teachers, or coaches for recommendations. You can pass on books to him, too. Or he might browse in a bookstore or library or at online sites ([www.teenreads.com](http://www.teenreads.com), [www.readinggrants.org](http://www.readinggrants.org)). *Tip:* When he likes a book, suggest that he read others by the same author.



- Book clubs are a great way to get teens to read and talk about books. Suggest that your teen

invite friends to form a club. Once a month, they can meet after school or on the weekends to discuss their selections.

- Even high schoolers enjoy a read-aloud! Read a book to your teen, one chapter a night. Or take turns reading a page or chapter aloud to one another. Reading together gives you something to talk about and is a great way to bond.

*continued*

- Check out audiobooks from the library, and play them when you're in the car together. Let your teen choose the titles—he'll be more apt to want to listen to them—and maybe strike up a conversation about his favorites.

## Writing

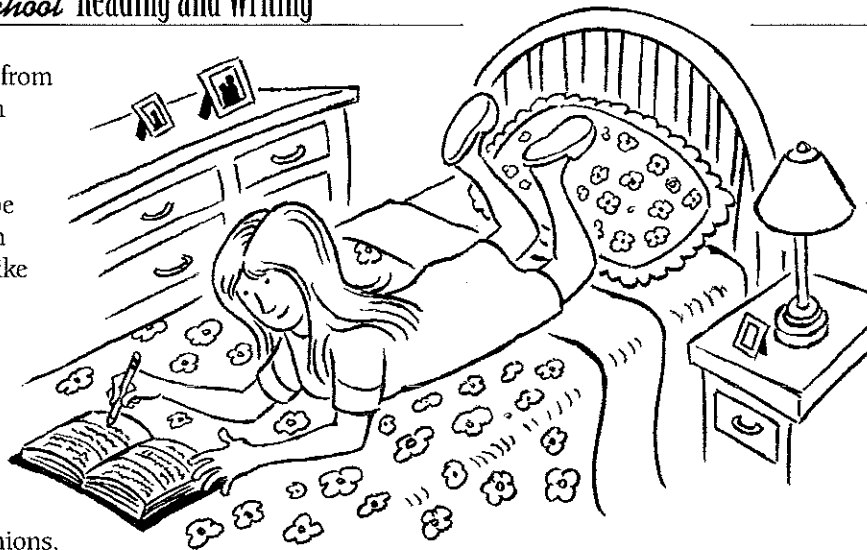
Knowing how to clearly express ideas, opinions, and feelings—whether in a school paper or a private journal—can boost your teen's confidence. Here are ways he can master the nuts and bolts of writing.

### Schoolwork

- Suggest that your teen use note cards to organize his thoughts for a school writing assignment. He can write main points on different cards and then arrange and rearrange their order until the information makes sense to him.



- Getting started on a writing project is often the toughest part. If your high schooler is struggling, suggest that he take 15 minutes to "free write" anything that comes to mind. This can help get ideas flowing.
- Encourage him to use the resources available at school. There might be a



writing lab where teachers or honor students will go over works in progress. Or English teachers might be willing to work with your teen on essays before or after school.

- Make sure your teenager knows you are happy to read over his essays and school papers. Also, ask him to read them aloud to you. Hearing his own writing can help pinpoint an awkward sentence, an unclear transition, or grammatical errors.

### Everyday writing

- Exchange notes with your child. Leave notes on her pillow, taped to a bathroom mirror, in her school lunch, or tucked into a book. Encourage her to write back by asking a question in your note.
- When heading out of town, have your teen write instructions about how to care for the family pet. Or ask her to research and write up ideas for places to visit.
- Have her write thank-you notes for birthday or holiday gifts. She'll practice writing friendly letters—and learn the importance of showing gratitude.
- If your child has a question about a test grade or homework assignment, encourage her to write an e-mail to her teacher. She can explain her reasoning and practice writing clearly.

### Creative writing

- Encourage your teen to keep a journal or diary and write each day on anything that comes to mind. She'll love having the journal to look back on when she's older. *Note:* Assure her that it's for her eyes only.
- After a family event or vacation, ask your high schooler to put together a

scrapbook or photo album. She can organize mementos or pictures and write a caption or story for each one. *Idea:* Have her write postcards to herself when she's away from home. She'll practice writing—and have a souvenir of her trip.



- Suggest that she write stories and poems. You might pull out samples of ones she wrote when she was little and ask her what she'd like to write about now.
- Encourage your teen to look at magazines or Web sites that accept writing from young people (try *Teen Ink* or [www.cicadamag.com](http://www.cicadamag.com)). Seeing what other teenagers write might inspire her to start writing, too. She can enter her work in local and national writing competitions (check your library or Web sites like [www.writingconference.com](http://www.writingconference.com) or [www.artandwriting.org](http://www.artandwriting.org)).

## High School Years