

A Positive Digital Footprint



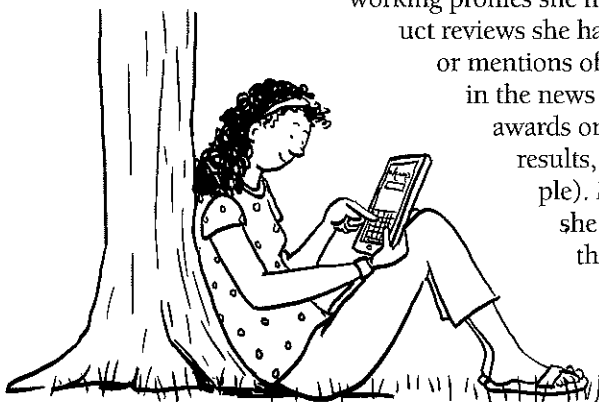
What is a digital footprint? If your teenager uses the Internet, then he has one! His footprint is the trail he leaves online, including comments, photos, and chats. And his footprint is seen not only by friends and relatives, but also by potential employers and college admissions staff. Here are ways to help your teen project a positive image—and stay safe—when he's online.

List rules

Talk to your high schooler about how you expect him to behave online. For example, he shouldn't post inappropriate photos of himself or anyone else, and he shouldn't post personal information like his phone number or address. Together, make a list of rules and hang it by the computer or on the refrigerator to remind him about responsible and safe behavior. *Idea:* Consider having him sign a "usage contract" so you're both on the same page. Make your own, or find one at fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/family-online-safety-contract.

Google yourself

To see what the world sees when searching her name online, encourage your teenager to type her name into Google or another search engine. She'll find links to any social networking profiles she has, product reviews she has posted, or mentions of her name



in the news (for awards or sports results, for example). *Note:* If she sees anything she

doesn't like, she could ask the site administrator or the person who posted it to remove it. (She can click on "About" or "Contact" to find the site owner.)

Project a good image

What kind of impression does your high schooler want to make on people who view his accounts? Suggest that he cast himself in a positive light by posting polite reviews, retweeting good news, or congratulating a school sports team, for instance. On the other hand, he should avoid using bad language or making nasty comments. Let him know that bad grammar can hurt his digital footprint, too!



Choose passwords wisely

Tell your teen to pick passwords that are difficult for others to guess. Keeping them secret can prevent people from accessing her devices and accounts and potentially sending or posting negative messages or charging purchases in her name. A combination of numbers and upper- and lower-case letters is much safer than her pet's name or her favorite color—things that others would know about her. She should also vary passwords across accounts, change them at least every three months, and keep any record of them in a safe spot (say, her desk drawer). Explain that she shouldn't share them with anyone besides you, not even her closest friends. If someone does learn a password, she'll need to change it right away.

continued



Online is forever

In this age of social networking, texting, and hacking, anything your high schooler posts or sends electronically may never go away—even if she deletes it. Point out that once she posts a comment or a photo, she should assume it's out there forever. Remind her that someone could have taken a screenshot of her post before she deleted it, an older version of the website may be available, or a hacker might steal information and repost it.

Monitor app updates

Have your teenager disable “automatic updates” on phone or tablet apps. Each time an app is updated, privacy settings might change, making his personal information and photos suddenly public. Instead, he can wait for a notification that an update is available. Then, he should read its latest sharing policy and change settings so he controls what others see about him.

Click carefully

Encourage your teen to be choosy about what she clicks on. The wrong link or attachment can put unwanted software on her device. Some of these programs steal personal information or even send messages on a user's behalf. Mention that she'd feel pretty embarrassed if an email she didn't write went to everyone in her inbox. To help guard against this, she should

keep protective software (anti-virus programs, adware removers) up to date and not click on pop-up or banner ads.

Steer clear of cyberbullying

Remind your high schooler that his real-life values (responsibility, kindness, respect) apply online and that you expect him not to participate in cyberbullying. That means thinking carefully about the text messages he sends and the comments he posts on social networks. Also, let him know what to do if he is bullied—he should tell you right away and block the sender. Depending on the post, you may need to contact the school or even the police.

Say no to online dating

More and more teenagers are using websites to find dates. Explain to your child that there's no way to know if people are really who they say they are. Besides, as she learns to form relationships, there's no substitute for getting to know someone face-to-face before deciding to date. When you set dating rules for her, include a rule against meeting someone in person whom she first met online.

Watch out for identity theft

Since teens are starting with a clean credit history, identity theft can go unnoticed for a long time—maybe even until your child applies for his first loan or credit card. Suggest that he check his bank account frequently for any unusual activity. Also, he could get a free credit report yearly from each of the three major credit bureaus (see *annualcreditreport.com*). *Note:* If someone has used his personal information to apply for or open an account, have him contact the bank or firm.



Spend time “IRL”

Limiting the amount of time your child spends using her phone or surfing the Internet will give her more time to interact with people in real life. Experts recommend no more than two hours of screen time per day for teenagers (not including homework).

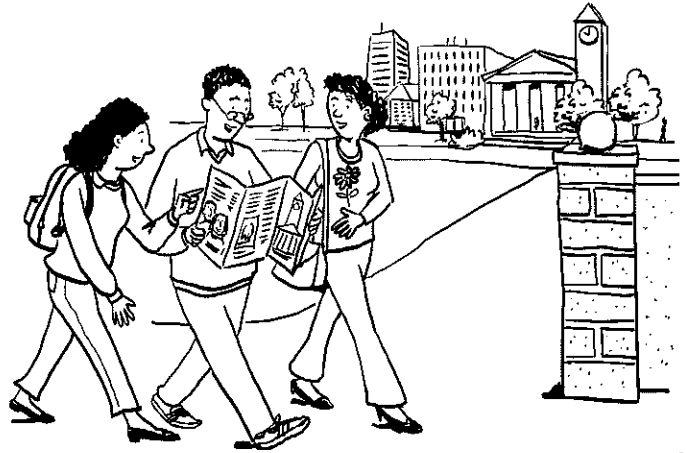


Encourage her to balance screen time with real-life activities like hanging out with friends, playing sports, participating in extracurricular activities, or doing community service.

High School Years

Thinking Ahead to College

Fast-forward to high school graduation. Will your teenager be off to college? The time to start planning is now! Use this guide to help her choose the right high school courses, find colleges that fit her needs, and figure out how to pay for it. By sharing this information, you can start a conversation about how to make her plans a reality.



Plotting out classes

Course requirements vary by college. Your teen should work with her school counselor and check colleges she's interested in to be sure she's getting the right mix, but at a minimum she'll need:



- Four years of language arts
- Three to four years of math, including algebra I, algebra II, and geometry (which are covered on college

entrance exams), and higher-level math like calculus or statistics for engineering or pre-med majors

- Three to four years of science, plus physics or other higher-level science for engineering or pre-med programs
- Two to three years of social studies
- Two to three years of the same foreign language
- At least one semester of arts, such as painting, dance, music, or drama

→ **What about AP?** Taking advanced placement classes or dual enrollment courses (offered jointly by a high school and a college) can give your teen a leg up. While the college your child attends may or may not award credit for these classes, challenging herself will build knowledge and make her applications stronger.

Reaching beyond the classroom

In addition to strong academic records, colleges look for well-rounded students. Suggest activities like these.

● **Extracurriculars.** Being involved gives your high schooler a chance to develop interests and to be a team player. This is true whether he's in the school environmental club, plays a sport, or joins a local singing group. *Tip:* Colleges prefer a long-term commitment to one or two activities, rather than hopping from one to another.

● **Community service.**

Focusing on a cause will show that your teen is passionate and persistent, as well as a good citizen. Suggest he find ways to help on issues that matter to him.



Say he's interested in literacy. He might start by reading to little ones at the library and eventually hold a book drive to benefit needy children.

● **Employment.** A part-time job demonstrates responsibility and will help your high schooler earn spending money for now or for college. Encourage him to land an after-school or summer job that fits his schedule and talents. The longer he holds the job, the better for both his skill-building and his college applications.

→ **Show leadership.** Colleges like to see applicants who have held leadership roles. Your teenager can do this by running for club officer, playing a key role on a community service project, or earning more responsible positions at work.

continued

Choosing a college

With thousands of schools to choose from, your teen will be able to find a great fit. These steps can help.

● **Decide what's important.** Together, make a list of what to consider, such as: programs offered, distance from home, city vs. rural campus, size of student body, sports programs, Greek life—and cost. *Idea:* Have her make a spreadsheet with those factors across the top. As she considers colleges, she can enter the information for each.



● **Make a list.** Encourage her to read college guides, visit school websites, talk to college students, attend college fairs, and go to information sessions at her high school. Schedule tours at nearby colleges—even if they're not the ones she's planning to apply to—so she can get a feel for different types of campuses. Then, try to visit ones she is serious about. Seeing campuses in person allows your teen to decide which one is the best fit for *her*.

● **Narrow it down.** Experts suggest applying to two or three schools from each of three categories: “reach” schools (harder to get into), “match” schools (a good chance), and “safety” schools (likely to be accepted). *Note:* Check with your school counselor or with colleges to see if she qualifies for waivers of the application fees.

→ **Apply early decision?** Sometimes a student is sure where she wants to go—and showing that commitment may give her a better shot at getting in. This can be a good option for some kids. But it's not a great choice if your child needs financial aid. If accepted, she won't be able to compare financial aid offers from other schools.



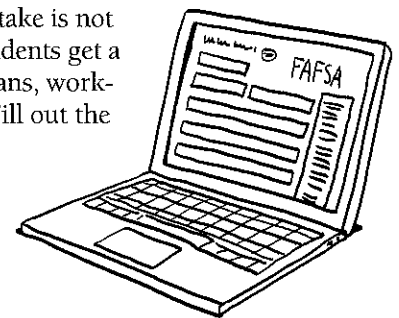
Paying for it

Tuition, room, board, books, and fees add up to a huge investment. Here are ways to get the ball rolling on financing college.

● **Start the discussion.** One of the best things you can do is to talk honestly with your teen about how much you will contribute (if anything). Knowing the financial situation up front will help him make the best decision.

● **Look at options.** One idea for keeping costs down: Attend community college and live at home for two years. Or he might go to college nearby and live at home all four years. If he's interested in more expensive colleges, don't rule them out at this point—those schools may award more aid than your state schools do.

● **Apply!** The biggest mistake is not applying for aid. Most students get a combination of grants, loans, work-study, and scholarships. Fill out the FAFSA financial aid form (fafsa.ed.gov) as soon as possible after January 1 in your child's senior year, as money may be awarded first come, first served. He'll be notified of financial aid packages after he's accepted.



● **Search for scholarships.** Beyond aid that colleges give, millions of dollars in scholarships are out there. Find options through scholarship apps like *Scholly* (99 cents) or websites (bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search). Look for money earmarked for students like him, perhaps for trumpet players, first-generation college students, or someone with a specific medical condition. Or he might be eligible for scholarships from your employer or religious group.

→ **Be loan smart.** Review interest rates and repayment terms before signing. Also, consider the salaries for careers he's interested in vs. the monthly payments he'll have to cover. *Tip:* By choosing certain jobs, such as teaching in low-income schools for at least five years, he might not have to pay back the full amount (see studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/forgiveness-cancellation).

High School Years

October 2015

High School YEARS

Working Together for Lifelong Success



Short Clips

Still involved

Parent involvement may look different in high school, but it still helps students do their best. The most important way to stay involved is to show interest in your child's schoolwork. Also, attend school events like curriculum nights or parent meetings, and volunteer if you can. You could work in the snack bar during football games or join an after-prom committee, for example.

A+ style

Your teen might need to use a style guide for school writing assignments. These standards show how to format papers and document sources—and make work consistent and professional. Encourage him to review the style assigned (perhaps MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style) and refer to it as he writes. This is good practice for the workplace, too.

Together time

Squeeze in one-on-one time with your high schooler by doing simple things together at home. Try making a breakfast date, and meet for waffles in the kitchen. Team up to change the oil in the car. Or browse through old family pictures, and share memories of when she was little.

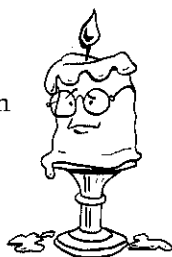
Worth quoting

"Our business in life is not to get ahead of others, but to get ahead of ourselves." *E. Joseph Cossman*

Just for fun

Q: I'm tall when I'm young and short when I'm old. What am I?

A: A candle.



Rules for teenagers

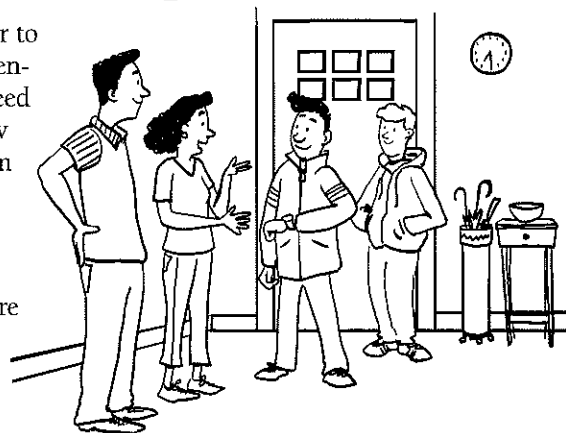
You want your high schooler to become responsible and independent. That means your rules need to change as he grows. But how do you go about adjusting them so he is both successful and safe? Consider these ideas.

Take a trial run

Gradually give your teen more freedom so you can see what he's ready for. Explain that if he succeeds with a new freedom, such as a later curfew, you will stick with it unless he gives you a reason not to. But if he doesn't abide by it, you'll go back to the old rule.

Handle new situations

New developments may crop up that require new responses. Say your teen wants to get a ride with his friend to school instead of taking the bus. Share your concerns (safety, getting to school on time), and discuss ways to overcome them. If you decide to say yes, set rules that address the concerns (wearing a seat belt at all times, no tardies at school).



Avoid the comparison game

Rules reflect your family's personal values. So if your child complains that his best friend can do something he can't, remind him that every family is different. Be willing to consider his viewpoint, and try a new rule if you think it's warranted. But help him understand your reasoning and realize that you have the final say.

Note: It's important to get your teenager's input, but make sure he knows that rules protecting his well-being are not negotiable. Those might include rules on alcohol, drugs, driving, Internet use, or dating, for example. 👍

About my day

"What did you do at school today, Carly?"

"Nothing, Mom."

Sound familiar? Try these creative questions to get the conversation going—and find out more about your teenager's life:

- If you wrote a story about your day, what would the title be?
- Which part of your day did you enjoy the most? The least?
- What was the funniest thing that happened?

■ Which of your classes would you teach if you could? Why?

■ What inspired you to pick that topic for your project?

■ What do you think you'll be doing in October 2025?

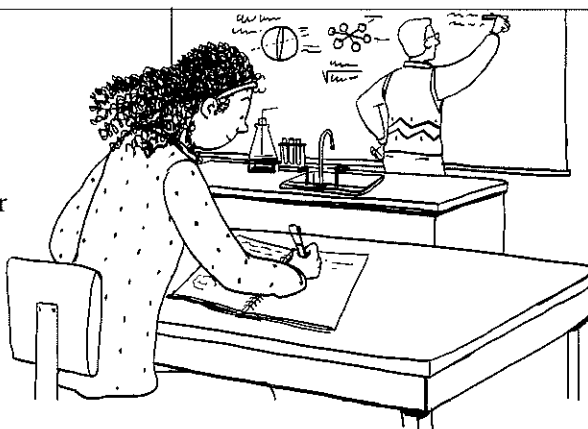
■ What super-power would have been great to have today? 👍



Noteworthy matters

Being a good note-taker will help your high schooler stay on task in class and get more from her textbook when she studies. Share these tips.

Make a system. Organize your notes by putting a date at the top and keeping notes for each subject separate. Use symbols and abbreviations to make note taking faster (*vs* for *versus* or *∴* for *therefore*). Also, write only the first few letters of long words (*eval* for *evaluate*).



Pick out what's important.

Focus on main points, such as information the teacher repeats, writes on the board, or sets apart with phrases like "Here are three reasons." Note taking will go more quickly if you list keywords and dates instead of writing complete sentences.

Add to notes. Review new notes daily at home, and

add details that help you understand the information better. *Idea:* Write questions in the margins, and then when you study, you can cover up your notes and use the questions for review. 👍



Parent to Parent Speak up for yourself

My son Tyler has a friend who always borrowed money but never paid it back. The boy often asked Tyler for a few dollars when they shopped together. Or he would promise to pay for half of something if Tyler would cover it up front.

My son was upset about this, but he refused to talk to his friend.

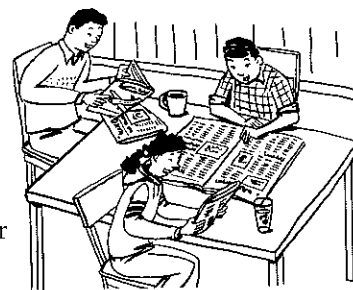


He said he thought Kyle would get annoyed and it would be "awkward." I explained that returning what you borrow is part of respecting your friends—and simply the right thing to do. Tyler reluctantly agreed to text Kyle about the amount he owed, and after a few days, Kyle finally gave him part of it.

Next time Kyle asks for a loan, Tyler plans to say, "I can't lend you anything because you don't pay me back." I hope my son is learning to speak up for himself, even when it's hard. 👍

Be a frequent reader

Nearly half of 17-year-olds report reading for fun only once or twice a year. Here are ways to change that trend with your teen.



■ **Be a reader yourself.** Parents who read regularly influence their children to read, too. Let your teenager see you browsing magazines or relaxing with a novel.

■ **Keep reading material on hand.** Put books, magazines, and comics in the car and in various rooms around the house. Change up the mix with finds from yard sales and used-book stores. And make regular trips to the library together—seeing all the choices can inspire your teen to pick out books he'll enjoy.

■ **Subscribe to a newspaper.** Leave the paper on the kitchen table. As your child gets used to reading at breakfast or after school, he'll develop his own go-to sections. Whether it's the front page, the sports section, or the arts column, reading a daily paper is a great way to develop a reading habit. 👍

Q & A "I wonder..."

Q I've heard that the best learners are kids who are curious. Is there a way to foster curiosity in my daughter?

A Having a strong desire to know something does motivate people to learn. So a good place to start is by encouraging your child to dig into topics she's already interested in.

If she enjoys country music, for example, she might look into how it got started and how it has changed.

That can lead to discovering older songs and singers she didn't know about. Or maybe she'll want to find out how country music stars write their songs—and try her hand at writing her own music.

Also, show your daughter that it's okay not to know everything. Admit when you don't have an answer, and look up the information together. She'll see that it's interesting to be curious about something and find out more. 👍



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