

## Know! The Key Skills for Academic Success

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As teens begin a new school year, we can help them start strong and stay on track toward academic success. We all know the importance of academic achievement in shaping the minds of our children, giving them a competitive edge to further their education and to better prepare them for future careers. In addition, research shows there are health benefits as well—as young people who achieve higher grades in the classroom also don't use drugs.

A past national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) showed that [students with higher grades were significantly less likely to drink, smoke marijuana, or abuse prescription drugs](#). This association doesn't prove causation, but it certainly provides families even greater motivation to make academic achievement a priority as it further sets young people up for success later in life.

With that in mind, let's kick off this school year right by helping our students strengthen and maintain these [5 Key Skills for Academic Success](#):

**Organization:** Sometimes academic challenges have more to do with organization than with intellect. Help your child get organized with these simple tips:

- Have them make a checklist of what they need to bring to and from school each day, then post it on whatever door they head out of each morning.
- Help them develop a system of keeping track of and organizing in-school and at-home assignments.
- **Time Management:** This is the classic, “wait until the night before an assignment is due to begin working on it, even though they've had weeks to complete it” syndrome. Every student has likely been there at some point, but we want to guide our children toward better time management:
- Have them track assignments on a monthly calendar and teach them to work backwards from the due date to break it down into smaller, nightly tasks.
- Work with your child to figure out how much time is being spent on homework weekly and help them divide that time into manageable chunks.
- With your child's input, choose a specific time block each afternoon or evening for studying and homework, and help your child stick to it.

**Prioritization:** Mounting piles of homework can become overwhelming. Without knowing where to begin, a student can easily fall behind and get off track for turning in assignments. Teach your child how to prioritize with these tips:

- Have your child write down all the things he or she needs to get done, including non-school-related items and activities.
- Ask your child to label each task from 1 to 3, with 1 being the most important.
- If your child is labeling all social activities as 1, you'll need to help them refocus and readjust their list to better prioritize for academic success.
- Have your teen then rearrange the list so that the 1s are at the top. Be sure they check the items off the list as they complete them—it feels good and is a real motivator to keep going!

**Concentration:** Designate an area for homework and studying that is free from interruptions and distractions, which typically means no phone, no TV, no playing games or checking social media on the computer, and—depending on your household—it may also mean keeping siblings out of this workspace as well.

**Motivation:** No matter what a person is trying to achieve, motivation is a key factor. A child may sincerely want to do well in school but may not have the drive to put in the work to make it happen. Help them find their motivation by tapping into their interests:

- If your son or daughter is learning about percentages, ask him or her to figure out the price of a discounted pair of footwear. If your children are passionate about music, give them books about musicians to help them learn the connections between music and foreign languages. It's about finding the drive to accomplish a goal.
- Give your child control and choices. With guidance, let them be the one to determine their study hours and organizing system.
- Encourage your child to share their expertise. It is motivating for them to be able to teach you something.
- Be sure to hand out plenty of praise, give them pats on the back, and sincerely celebrate their successes!

It takes a combination of skills—organization, time management, prioritization, concentration and motivation—to achieve academic success. You know your child better than anyone. Work with them to identify problem areas, focus on the skills that need strengthened, and strive to help your son or daughter maintain the ones they've mastered. With your support and guidance, your child will be better prepared to start the school year off strong and remain on the road to success, both in and out of the classroom.