

# NINTH GRADE

## Parent Guidebook



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# Dear Parent

Welcome to ninth grade—and to high school! This is an exciting time for your child, and for you. Your ninth grader is becoming more independent and self-sufficient every day; however, your support and guidance continue to be very important.

This book will give you the information you need to help your teen not only succeed academically, but to also thrive and grow. With your involvement and support, your child is sure to have a great year!



We know that many children are being raised by grandparents or guardians. For the sake of simplicity, the term “parent” refers to any primary caregiver.

# Ninth Grade Parent Guidebook

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# Welcome to High School

**Ninth grade is an extremely important year! You can help your child get high school off to a great start by being informed and involved, showing consistent interest, and by providing lots of support.**

## Be informed and involved



- ▶ Attend school programs and activities. You'll learn valuable information and your child will see that his/her education is important to you.
- ▶ Regularly check your school's website and keep up to date on what's happening at your child's school, and in the community.
- ▶ Learn about the following on your school's website or in your school's handbook:
  - ▶ Important dates (e.g., holidays, parent meetings)
  - ▶ Attendance policies and procedures
  - ▶ School rules (e.g., dress code, cell phone policy)
- ▶ Know what courses your freshman is taking and show interest in what he/she is learning. Regularly talk to your child about what's happening at school, and be a good listener.
- ▶ Know who your child's teachers and school counselor are, and make sure your child knows how to arrange a meeting with his/her counselor.
- ▶ Help your child maintain a positive attitude about school. Provide encouragement, and celebrate your child's successes!



## Know that everything “counts”

When a student enters high school, everything starts to count. All ninth grade courses, grades, and credits will be on the student’s transcript, and freshman grades will be used to calculate the student’s Grade Point Average (GPA). Make sure your child understands the importance of working hard this year—right from day one.

## Encourage involvement

Studies show that students who are involved in extracurricular activities enjoy school more and do better academically. Activities are also a great way for students to meet new friends, have fun, and feel like they’re part of the school community.

Most high schools offer some, if not all, of the following activities: athletic teams, music programs, speech and drama programs, service groups, and special interest clubs (e.g., Spanish, chess, art). Learn about the activities at your child’s high school and encourage your teen to get involved in at least one activity each term.

## Work with your school

Like you, everyone in the school wants your freshman to have a successful, positive year. If your student is having a problem with a particular class, contact the teacher. If your child is struggling in several classes, having a problem with a teacher or classmate, or dealing with something else that’s affecting his/her school success, arrange a meeting with your child’s counselor.



# School Success

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**A large part of your child's high school success depends on what he/she does this year.**

**Use these tips to help ensure that your child has a successful start to high school.**

## Get your child off to a great start

**Provide school supplies and a good place to study.** In addition to paper, pens and pencils, students need notebooks, folders, a calculator, and an assignment notebook or planner (if your school doesn't provide one). Your student also needs a place at home to study that's quiet, well-lit, and comfortable.

**Require daily attendance.** Your student needs to be in school on time every day unless he/she is ill. Attendance is the #1 school success factor!

**Develop routines.** Having a good morning and nighttime routine makes the day run much smoother. Help your child establish routines that include going to bed early enough to get 8-9 hours of sleep, and getting up early enough to eat breakfast and get to school on time.

**Set goals.** Setting goals will help your child understand your expectations—and goals give your student specific things to work toward. For example, you and your child might think about what grade he/she should realistically be able to earn in each course this term, or you could focus more on study habits (e.g., having all homework completed by 9:00 each night).

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## Encourage good study habits

**Help organize and prioritize homework.** If your child seems to be disorganized or frustrated with homework, help him/her create a study plan. Encourage your child to decide exactly what needs to be done, and the order in which he/she is going to do it—prioritizing the work to ensure that the most important things are completed.

**Suggest that your child use a planner every day.** Encourage your freshman to take a planner to every class and use it to record assignments, tests, quizzes, appointments, practices, and anything else he/she needs to remember.

**Help break down large assignments.** Large projects and assignments can seem overwhelming. Show your student how to break them down into smaller, more manageable tasks.

**Teach time management.** Encourage your child to use any “free time” during the day to get started on homework. Also talk to your child about scheduling short periods of time for social media activities, watching TV, and/or playing video games.

## Monitor progress

It's important that your child be successful in all of his/her classes. Make sure you see all midterm reports and report cards, and if your child's grades are available online, check them regularly.

If you don't see a midterm report or report card, contact the school and request a copy. *Do not just assume that someone will contact you if there's a problem.*

## Be available to help

All ninth graders need encouragement and support, and many need extra help from time to time. Be available to help if your child gets stuck, needs someone to listen to a speech, look over an essay, or help study for a test. However, don't give more help than is wanted, and never do the work yourself.





# The Social Scene

**Friends are very important to high school students; however, adjusting to a new social scene isn't always easy. Here's how you can help your child navigate this important aspect of high school.**

## What you can do

- ▶ Encourage after-school activities. Extracurricular activities are a great way to meet other students with similar interests, and being part of a team or group gives students a sense of belonging.
- ▶ Help your child deal with friendship shifts. A best friend in middle school may now have new interests and new friends. Encourage your child to keep his/her "old friends," and to work on making new ones.
- ▶ Maintain family activities. While being with friends is important to high school students, doing things with family provides them with a much needed sense of security. Spend quality time with your child, plan family outings, and eat meals together as often as possible.
- ▶ Build self-esteem. Students with a positive self-image are less influenced by peer pressure and less affected by social concerns. Help your child recognize his/her strengths, pursue personal interests and passions, and develop a strong sense of self.



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## Discuss tough issues

*Help your child deal with difficult social situations.*

**Peer pressure.** Now that they are in a new school environment, many ninth graders struggle to find their own identity. Because “fitting in” can be so important, teens are often susceptible to peer pressure. Talk to your child about peer pressure and make sure your teen knows that he/she doesn’t need to change to be liked. Devise a plan and have a phrase your child can use to navigate out of difficult situations.

**Drugs and alcohol.** Be informed about what’s happening in your school and community, and find teachable moments to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, smoking, and vaping. Make sure your child knows where you stand on these issues—and that there will be consequences for their use.

## Set limits

*Freshmen need to have clear rules and limits regarding social activities.*

- ▶ When your child leaves the house, know who he/she is going to be with, where they are going, and what they’ll be doing. Require your child to check in often.
- ▶ Base the amount of freedom your child is given on how responsible he/she is. Teens need to understand that they will be held accountable for their actions and behavior.



## Promote independence

If your ninth grader has a question or problem, help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own. Being able to get their questions answered and their problems solved helps students gain confidence, and it gives them sense of empowerment.

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# Communicating with Your Child

**Communicating with students this age can be challenging at times. But because it's so important, parents need to make the extra effort.**

**Timing is important.** Be available to listen when your child wants to talk. Find times when your teen is most likely to be open to conversation (e.g., after getting home from school or before going to bed). A particularly good time to talk is when you're driving in the car. It's quiet, no one can leave, and you're already spending the time together.

**Tell your child what you want done (instead of what you don't want done).** For example, instead of saying, "Don't leave your backpack on the floor" say, "Please put your backpack in your room."

**Ask open-ended questions that require more than one word answers.** Instead of asking "How was school?" say, "Tell me about your day," or ask, "What's that book about?"

**Don't feel that you need to fix every problem.** Young people often just want someone to listen – not solve their problems for them. Remember, this is a time when students need to develop their problem solving skills.

**Recognize your child's concerns.** Something that may seem like a small thing to you could be a big thing to your ninth grader. If your child has a concern or problem, listen attentively, and help him/her figure out how to deal with it and move forward.

**Know that your child hears you. Teens may act like they don't hear what their parents say, but they do listen.**



## Nonverbal communication

Make time for one-on-one activities. It's often easier to talk to your child when you're doing something you both enjoy, such as cooking, watching a game, or going out for ice cream.

Make it easy for your teen to talk to you, but know that just because your child doesn't say anything doesn't mean that he/she has nothing to say.

Children aren't always able to put into words what they need you to know. Nonverbal communication is therefore often just as important as what's said.

- ▶ Be aware of your child's eating and sleeping patterns. Too much or too little of either may indicate that your child is troubled by something.
- ▶ Pay attention to your child's body language and moods. These can be good indicators of how things are going at school and with friends.

*Listen to your instincts. If you think something is wrong, talk to your child about your concerns—or try sending your child an email or text message expressing your support and openness to talking.*

## Be available

Always be available to talk to your ninth grader, and make sure your child knows that he/she can talk to you about anything, anytime, without fear of punishment or judgment.



# Technology

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**While technology opens up many wonderful doors, the explosion of technology and social media also presents new challenges. Help your child enjoy the benefits of technology, while minimizing the risks.**

## Discuss appropriate uses

- ▶ Remind your child that people online may not be who they say they are, and to never share personal information online (e.g., phone number, address, school, favorite hangout).
- ▶ Make sure your child understands that when a message or photo is sent, *it becomes permanent*. This means that somebody will always have access to what you send—and it can always be recovered.
- ▶ Discuss the importance of being respectful and kind to others online. Remind your child that others can't see your facial expression or hear your tone of voice online, so messages can easily be misunderstood.

## Provide structure and set limits

- ▶ Make sure your child knows that tech toys and online games are a privilege that can be enjoyed only if he/she meets your standards at home and at school.
- ▶ Insist that all devices be silenced and put away during dinner and other family times. To ensure that your child isn't on the phone late at night, consider requiring that all phones be plugged in for recharging in a central location (e.g., your bedroom) each night.

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# Bullying

**Students, parents, and schools need to work together to help make their school bully-free.**

## What you can do

- ▶ Teach your child to respect others and to be tolerant of those with different opinions, beliefs, and backgrounds.
- ▶ If your child witnesses bullying at school, encourage him/her to report the incident to a teacher, counselor, or principal.
- ▶ Bullies often target students who are passive or quiet. Encourage your child to stand tall, walk confidently, look people in the eye, and use body language that shows self-confidence.
- ▶ If your child tells you he/she is being harassed or bullied, have him/her explain what has happened, who was involved, and when, where, and how often it occurred. Make printouts of anything that's been sent or posted online.
- ▶ Be aware. If you notice any of the following, ask your child if someone is causing problems for him/her at school or online.
  - ▶ suddenly more anxious, quiet, insecure, or withdrawn
  - ▶ drop in grades
  - ▶ not wanting to go to school
  - ▶ loss of appetite or complaints of illness
- ▶ If you learn that your child has been harassing others, take it seriously and don't make excuses. (Even good kids sometimes behave badly.) Discuss the possible effects of his/her behavior, and hold your child accountable.

## Be there for your child

When children are bullied in school or online, it's critical that parents listen to them, believe them, and empower them.



# Career & College

**Now is a good time to start talking about your child's future, and to help your child explore his/her career and education options.**

## Identify abilities and interests

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone. You can, therefore, be an invaluable resource in helping your child identify career-related interests, talents, strengths, and values.

Try to help your child see how his/her personality traits and abilities can be valuable assets in the right career. Remember, there are many talents that aren't measured in school (e.g., leadership, teamwork, creativity, empathy).

## Explore, dream, and learn

**This is the year for your child to explore, dream, and learn about a variety of careers. To begin, help your child explore careers related to his/her favorite school subjects. The high school guidance/counseling office and the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* ([bls.gov/ooh](https://www.bls.gov/ooh)) are great places to start.**

## Discuss education options

Most careers require education and/or training beyond high school. While some careers require four years of college, others require one or two years of additional education. A student's career choice will often determine which education option is most appropriate.



Make sure your child understands the importance of doing well in school, and encourage your child to continue his/her education after high school.

## Plan for college

If your student is considering going to college, here are some things he/she should do this year:

- ▶ take college prep classes and work hard to get good grades.
- ▶ develop his/her interests and talents and participate in a variety of activities.
- ▶ make informal college visits to get a feel for what college is like – take a walk on a college campus or attend a college theatre performance or sporting event.



## In Closing

Helping your child have a successful year doesn't require doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day that provide the guidance and support your child needs.

With your encouragement, love, and support, your child is sure to be successful this year, and in the years to come.



# NINTH GRADE

## Parent Guidebook

**Information, tips, and advice  
for parents of ninth grade students.**

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