

# How can I keep my teen engaged while she learns online?

## PARENT TIP SHEET

It's likely that your teen has faced challenges that may have caused her to become less engaged in one or more of her virtual classes. Maybe she's run into technical issues, experienced "Zoom fatigue," or just misses being in a physical classroom with her teachers and classmates. Whatever the case, here are a few tips to help her stay engaged and avoid online burnout.

### Tip 1: Encourage your teen to set goals.

As teens transition to high school, they begin to think more and more about their future. Your teen is likely aware that her grades and GPA can affect her future goals. Learning online can be a great way for you to encourage her to focus on her classes and set meaningful goals.



#### Say This

- "Let's set one small goal to accomplish every day for your classes (e.g., answering a question in the chat, finishing all your homework, asking your teacher for help)."
- "What classes did you enjoy in person? What makes some classes more difficult online?"



#### Do This

- Help your teen set goals to improve her grades (e.g., turning in more assignments, improving the quality of her work, keeping track of how often she participates).
- Talk with your teen about what she would like to do after graduation. Remind her that doing well in school now can help her achieve those goals later.



#### Check This

- What are the teachers' grading policies? Use this information to help your teen meet due dates, turn in late work, or earn extra credit to improve her grades.
- Also check on expectations for virtual instruction. Is your teen encouraged to turn on her video, log-in a few minutes early, or use headphones to limit distractions? Doing these things might help her stay more focused during class.

### Tip 2: Teach your teen to speak up.

When they're confused or frustrated, students often hide behind their screens and become disengaged. It's important for your teen to speak up when she has a question, needs help, or realizes something isn't working for her. Most teachers wish to create a meaningful virtual learning environment for everyone.



#### Say This

- "You are always so happy after science class but seem frustrated after social studies. What makes one class so interesting and the other so frustrating?"
- "Do you ask for help when you don't understand something? If you don't want to ask in front of your classmates, send your teacher a private chat or ask her to help you later."



### Do This

- After class, ask your teen to write down one thing (e.g., structured assignments, working with classmates, guided videos) that kept her engaged. Writing information down can help her think about what works and doesn't work for her while she learns online.
- Encourage your teen to share what she likes and doesn't like with her teachers. Help her draft an email or practice a conversation.



### Check This

- Find out whether her teacher offers different ways to complete assignments (e.g., recording a video instead of writing a paragraph, working in a group). She may be more motivated and engaged if she can choose how to complete an assignment.
- Check in with your teen to make sure she continues to speak up when she needs help. Sharing what works and doesn't work should be ongoing, not just a one-time conversation.

Teaching your teen to speak up for her needs is an important skill, one she will use throughout her life! Although she may find online learning challenging, your teen may now be able to recognize when she's struggling and communicate these thoughts and feelings.

## Tip 3: Help your teen explore other opportunities for engagement.

Extracurricular activities like sports, clubs, concerts, and plays often keep teens motivated to do well in school. When they're motivated, they're more likely to stay engaged in class. Because many of these opportunities aren't readily available during virtual learning, encourage her to explore other activities.



### Say This

- "Try having a weekly competition with your friends to see who can take the most steps. You can use an app to track your mileage."
- "You should start a film club with your classmates and share your videos online."

Who doesn't love a contest? Ask your teen's principal whether it's possible to organize a fun virtual event like a singing competition or talent show. This could be an exciting way for the entire school to come together, especially after a difficult year.



### Do This

- If your teen normally looks forward to the spring band concert, encourage her to perform a song with her friends during a break in the school day.
- Help your child organize a virtual extracurricular activity (e.g., hobby themed clubs; singing, dancing, or photography contests). Creating an event that engages her school community can boost her self-esteem and make her more excited to log in each day.



### Check This

- Check to see whether any after-school activities are offered online. Local community centers may host virtual art, theatre, yoga, college test-prep, or cooking classes.
- Observe your teen's attitude. With new activities to engage in, has her attitude toward school changed?

## References

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