



Building Healthy Habits for the New School Year

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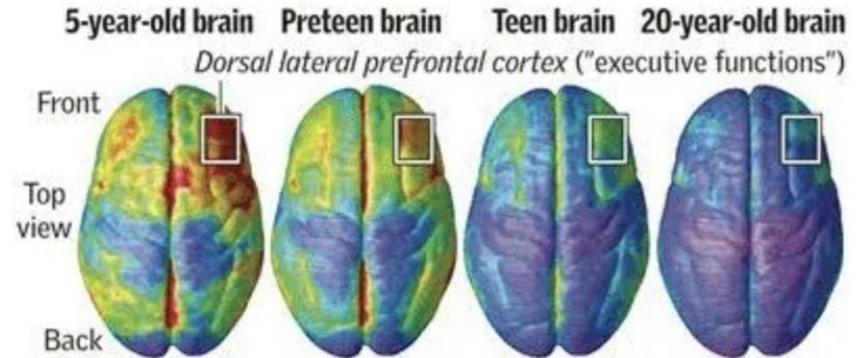
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General Organization

- Routines
 - Wake-up, bedtime, meals, exercise, homework, leisure, etc.
- Visuals
 - Daily routines/schedule
 - Chore/task list
 - Family calendar
- Break tasks down
 - Not “clean your room”



Red/yellow: Parts of brain less fully mature  **Blue/purple:** Parts of brain more fully mature

Sources: National Institute of Mental Health;
Paul Thompson, Ph.D., UCLA Laboratory of
Neuro Imaging

Thomas McKay | The Denver Post

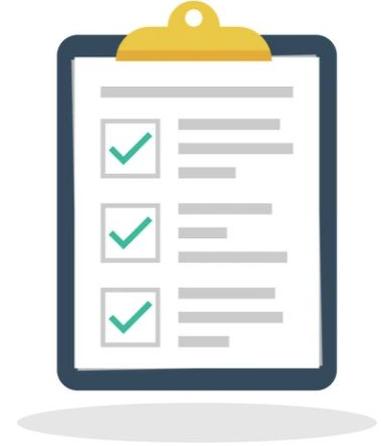
Homework Strategies



- Consistent afternoon/evening routine
 - Snack/decompression
 - Homework (rule of thumb = 10 min. per grade level)
 - Dinner/leisure/wind-down
- Getting started
 - Start with an easier task, then a harder one, then an easier one, etc.
- Staying focused
 - Work near another person
 - Silence, background music, lighting, fidgets, snacks?
 - No “multi-tasking”!

Homework Strategies

- Back-planning and goal setting
 - Break assignments down
 - Back-plan from due date
 - Tomorrow is a new day!
- Chunking
 - 25 minutes on, 5 minutes off
 - Be mindful of how break time is spent
- Studying
 - Cumulative approach
 - Identify key words
 - Use mnemonics and visual aids
 - Write it out
- Use lists, visuals, planners
 - Checklist for backpack
 - Weekly/monthly calendar
 - Digital apps/paper planners (see resources)



Should Parents Help with Homework?



- What if I see mistakes?
 - If needed, help your child “launch” and stay on track, but don’t correct.
- What if my kid is stuck/doesn’t know how to do the problem?
 - Ask guiding questions to help troubleshoot how to figure it out.
- How can I help my kid get homework done faster?
 - Help them learn to “chunk” their work, use a timer, use productivity apps.
- How can I get my kid to stop procrastinating with long-term assignments?
 - Review upcoming assignments, help them break down steps and plan ahead.
- How can I get my kid to remember to hand in completed homework?
 - Use a visual cue, e.g., sticky notes on iPad, in locker
 - Enlist teacher support
- Bottom line - remember your ultimate goals for your child!

When should my child be independent?

- Banish “should” from your vocabulary.
- Was there **one** single time when all kids:
 - Walked?
 - Spoke in sentences?
 - Learned to read?
 - Rode a bike?



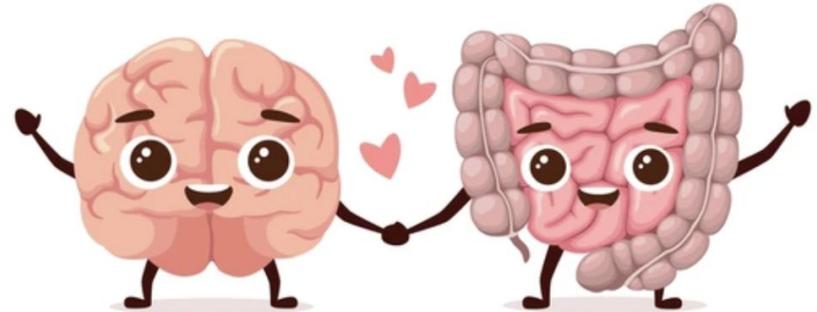
Sleep

- Amount recommended
 - Age 6-12: 9-12 hours
 - Age 13-18: 8-10 hours
- Sleep hygiene
 - Consistent bedtime/wake-up time (and avoid weekend “jet lag”)
 - Count back from “ideal” bedtime to map out afternoon routine
 - No afternoon naps
 - No caffeine in the afternoon
 - No screen time for an hour before bedtime
 - No screens in the bedroom overnight
 - Phones, iPads, computers, TVs, gaming systems
 - Family charging station
 - Parental controls to shut down overnight



Exercise, nutrition

- Regular physical exercise
 - Doesn't need to be structured
- Time in nature
 - Boosts attention span, creativity, mood
- Gut-brain axis
 - Promote fruits, veggies, legumes, nuts, probiotics, omega-3
 - Limit processed foods, added sugars



Leisure time



- Benefits of pursuing passions and hobbies
 - Social connection
 - Sense of identity
 - Internal motivation
 - Competence
 - Relieve stress





Screen Time

- As smartphones/social media rose in early 2010s, teens internationally reported:
 - higher depressive sx, lower happiness
- Current prevalence of social media use in teens (Pew Research Center, late 2024):
 - 73% on YouTube daily, incl. 15% reporting “almost constant” use
 - 60% on TikTok daily, incl. 16% with “almost constant” use
 - ~50% on Instagram and Snapchat daily, incl. ~10% with “almost constant use”
- Data shows differences according to:
 - *Gender*: girls more on TikTok, boys more on YouTube
 - *Race/ethnicity*: higher rates of self-reported use in Black and Latino teens than White teens
 - *Age*: higher rates of use in teens aged 15-17 than those aged 13-14

On average, kids get their first smartphone around age 11, and almost 40% of kids age 10-12 use social media!

Not all screen time is created equal...

Social media



Pros:

- Community, shared interests/identities
- Access to information
- Creative outlet

Cons:

- Negative comparison, focus on “likes”
- Contact from unknown adults (1/5 of 13-15 y/o girls sexually propositioned)
- Cyber bullying, sextortion, exposure to harmful/disturbing content
- Teens with 3+ hours/day on social media at 2x higher risk of anxiety and depression
- Higher concern for teen girls and kids with pre-existing mental health problems
- LGBTQ+ teens who are heavy social media users more likely to be depressed

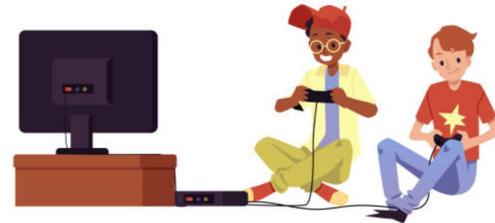
Video games

Pros:

- Spatial skills, logical problem-solving, impulse control, working memory, manual dexterity
- Can promote relaxation, build resilience
- Builds connections, cooperation, team-building, community

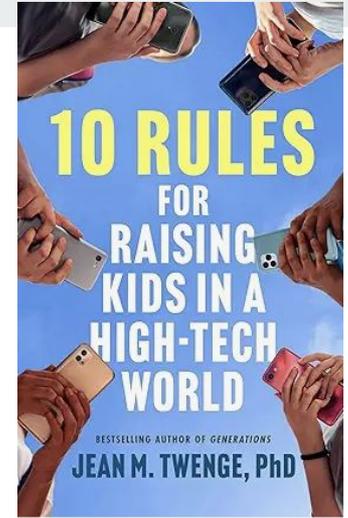
Cons:

- Could desensitize to violence or impair empathy, depending on content (though no direct causal link to violent behavior)
- Could lead to sleep problems, sedentary lifestyle, etc.



Screen-related recommendations

- Jean Twenge, Ph.D., advises:
 - No smartphone or social media until 16 or later
 - Avoid giving kids their own designated tablet or gaming console
- Develop a clear family media contract and stick to consequences
 - Phone-free hours/spaces - e.g., homework, dinner, vacation
 - Phone is a privilege, not a right
 - Different families = different rules
- Set up parental controls - via operating system and/or third-party software
 - Don't download apps without permission
 - Time limits
 - Controls for night-time, school hours
 - Block inappropriate websites/social media
 - Monitor periodically - pornography, cyberbullying, self-harm, disordered eating, toxic ideologies
- And try to be a good role model...



When To Seek Help



If you are concerned regarding your child's functioning in **any** of the areas described above:

- Be cautious about adopting a “wait and see” approach - time flies!
- Don't hesitate to:
 - Consult with your pediatrician
 - Talk to the school about strategies/supports/accommodations
 - Consider undertaking a more comprehensive evaluation to gather more data

Resources - Books

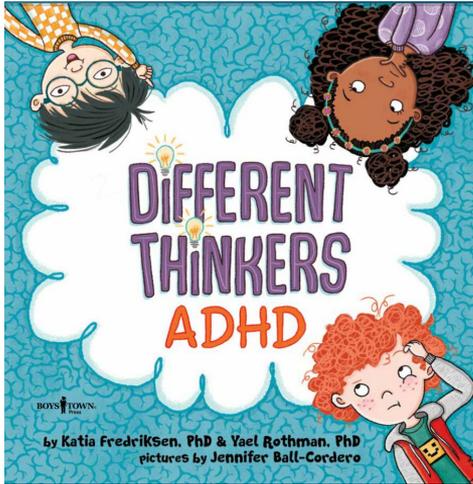


- Executive functioning skills:
 - Bill Stixrud and Ned Johnson's book, *The Self-Driven Child*
 - *The Disengaged Teen*, by Jenny Anderson and Rebecca Winthrop
 - *Smart but Scattered Teens*, by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
 - *The Work-Smart Academic Planner*, by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
- General parenting:
 - *Raising Kids Who Can*, by Cathy McCarthy, Heather Tedesco, and Jennifer Weaver
 - *The Whole-Brain Child*, by Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson
- Social media/screens:
 - *10 Rules for Raising Kids in a High Tech World*, by Jean Twenge

Resources - Apps

- Things, Remember the Milk - to-do lists, help with planning
- GoalsonTrack - setting goals, with sub-goals
- My Study Life, myHomework Student Planner, Homework 2 - student planners
- Joon - gamified task lists
- Time Timer - customizable visual timer
- OneNote, Notability - write, record notes
- Google Keep - note-taking/organization with color-coding features
- WorkFlowy - helps teachers and students make lists and stay organized
- Choiceworks Calendar - visual schedules/task management
- Quizlet, Study Stack, Kahoot - gamified studying, flash cards
- Forest - gamified way of avoiding distractions during work time - plant a seed, watch it grow
- Photomath - step-by-step instructions to solve problems
- Here Comes the Bus - tracks the school bus and sends alerts
- Calm - mindfulness/meditation
- Headspace - guided meditation
- Mindful Powers - care for cute creature to support mindfulness and self-control

Contact



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