

HOME SCHOOLING TEENS

Teenagers are young adults who reason, think, and challenge issues that parents take for granted. They want answers, and parents are responsible for showing them how to find those answers. While in lower grades, children learn by memorizing facts, in teen years they learn to apply their knowledge through formulating valid concepts, analyzing arguments, and orienting themselves as mature individuals. It is vital that we teach by principles that are consistent with our own values since this educational process will develop every area of our teen's life – mentally, spiritually, socially, physically, and culturally.

To teach our young people how to live, they need a balanced learning environment. This includes (1) *analytical learning* – acquiring information through a teacher, books, tapes, and other forms of media; (2) *creative learning* – exploring one's interests by developing projects; (3) *practical learning* – applying information learned to everyday living. Most of us are familiar with analytical learning because that is how a traditional school dispenses information. However, we are not as comfortable with the creative and practical learning approaches. If your son, for example, is interested in architecture, for a project (creative learning) he could study the history of architecture, including the designs of different types of structures throughout history in various cultures. To complement his research skills, he could construct a model of one or more buildings, draw some examples, or expand his computer skills by employing an architectural program. Perhaps he could present his project to a small group of family and friends to practice his speech skills. Furthermore, an apprenticeship with a local architect would give him practical learning experience. As you can see, this approach utilizes a variety of skills while exploring one particular subject. A balanced learning environment provides the flexibility for developing family-living skills, part-time jobs, cottage industries, community service, and more. Teens will not only enter college, the work-force, and marriage with plenty of book (analytical) learning, but will also have experienced inventiveness and curiosity (creative learning) while establishing practical living skills.

Teaching difficult subjects in the high school years is not as daunting as it seems. While textbooks supply excellent teacher's manuals, most home school support groups are replete with parents gifted in every area of life. Families can co-op teach or hire a tutor to teach a group of students. Moreover, at age sixteen, students can take advantage of dual credit programs with a local community college. Don't underestimate your high schooler's ability, though, because many are capable of teaching themselves with occasional help from an adult. As the parent, you may even surprise yourself as you dredge algebra out of the archives of your brain and find yourself actually teaching the dreaded subject!

While balanced learning stimulates the intellect, teens need positive outlets for the volcanic hormones surging through their bodies. Channeled appropriately, young people can avoid the violence and immorality that are so prevalent in our society today. Since boys tend toward aggressive behavior during these formative years, provide activities that utilize that energy. Some prefer sports or a part-time job, while others dive into the world of computers. Whatever your son's niche, give him the space to participate in an outlet. These opportunities will help keep that budding sexual drive in check. More emotional than boys, girls need someone or something to love. A regular babysitting job provides your daughter the opportunity to lavish affection on a baby. If she is an animal lover, give her a pet for which she should be solely responsible. Enabling her to release those emotions appropriately will keep the doors closed to sexual temptation.

Along with appropriately channeled energies, teens need stable influences in their lives. Parents who invest *time* in their young adults will create the means for open and honest relationships. There is simply no substitute for a healthy relationship with your son or daughter. Young people need parents that listen without judging, who allow them to make decisions, and who cover them with mercy and grace when they fail. Family activities (games/outings), one-on-one times, get-togethers with other families, and household chores all nurture a positive, trusting relationship between the parent and teen. The security built within this framework for your teen will provide the springboard for healthy relationships outside the home.

While some teens may be ready for the responsibilities of marriage, most are preparing for college or the work force. Parents can prepare a transcript of courses taken, grades received, and credits given. Find these forms online or design one on the computer. Like any other students, homeschoolers, take college prep exams (SAT or ACT) if they plan to attend college. They also take a classes to prepare for the exam. Local high schools provide applications, but information is always available online as well. These exams may be taken several times, so plan on a practice exam before submitting a test score to the college of your student's choice. Copies of the test score and the transcript are sent to the college when he applies for admission. For graduation, families award their teens with diplomas (designed on the computer or purchased) and plan receptions with friends and family. Some homeschool groups even provide formal graduation services. Employers and colleges alike are finding that homeschoolers make excellent employees/students, and these young people encounter few problems pursuing their beyond high school goals.

As a personal example, our home schooled daughter-in-law received the President's Scholarship (a full scholarship) to Tarleton University in Stephenville, Texas. She graduated Suma Cum Laude (in three years), giving the student speech at her graduation ceremony. She also received a scholarship for Texas Women's University, Denton, Texas, for her masters in dietetics. After our son's apprenticeship with Esther's dad, he built his own contracting business, and also began working on his bachelor's in business through an external degree program with Regent's University, New York. Jonathan studied each subject and then took a final exam (CLEP) which gave him credit for the class. This approach fit into his plans while he built his own business.

All in all, home schooling teenagers is the "icing on the cake." In the early years, parents lay the foundation, but in the teen years, they build on that foundation, personally attending to that solid construction. Goals long dreamed of begin to take shape as your young adult nears his target. Being a part of your teen's life in such positive ways brings your family great satisfaction. These are challenging and exciting times for the whole family . . . Enjoy!