

What to Do If Your Teen Has Failing Grades in High School

(by Amy Morin, LCSW from verywellfamily.com)

Further recommended reading:

Article: [Student Life Survey Reports Homework is Students' Leading Cause of Stress Followed by Grades](#) from theprincetonreview.com

Finding out your teen has failing grades can be frustrating and scary. After all, failed classes could mean a lower GPA, trouble getting into college, and perhaps even [trouble graduating from high school on time](#).

When high school students fall behind in their classes, catching up can be quite difficult. When grades begin to plummet, many teens give up.

Ways to Help

If your teen is failing a class—or they're already failed the entire semester—take action. There are several things you can do to address the issue.

Identify the Problem

If your teen has a failing grade or is in danger of not passing, sit down and discuss the problem. Ask your teen for help uncovering the reasons he's not passing. Sometimes students who start out strong get sidetracked while other students just aren't motivated to stay on track.

Talk to your teen and examine whether or not any of these issues have contributed to a failing grade.

- **Are the classes too hard?** Sometimes teens sign up for classes that are just too difficult and they become overwhelmed.
- **Is your child not doing the homework?** If your teen isn't doing homework, it will be extremely difficult to pass a class. Find out if homework isn't completed, not turned in on time, or if your child doesn't understand how to do it.
- **Are low test scores a problem?** Some students struggle with test anxiety or aren't sure how to study for tests.
- **Has your child had a lot of absences?** If your child has missed school due to illness or other issues, it can severely interfere with grades.

- **Is your child under a lot of stress?** If your teen is stressed out, he may have difficulty concentrating and completing his work.
- **Could a mental health issue be part of the problem?** [Mental health problems](#), such as depression or anxiety often contribute to failing grades. Substance abuse issues can also be a factor in declining grades.

Talk to the Teachers

Although your teen may not want you to talk to the teachers, it's important to speak with them to help determine the problem. Your teen may not be aware that they're not paying attention in class or that they're missing a lot of work. Ask for teachers' opinions about what your child needs to do differently to pass the class.

Consider whether your child may have a learning disability as well. Sometimes learning disabilities or ADHD go undiagnosed until the high school years. Inquire about whether or not educational or psychological testing could be helpful.

Problem-Solve With Your Teen

Once you have a better idea of why they're failing, sit down and [problem-solve with your teen](#). Discuss their ideas about how they can improve their grade. Sometimes, simple yet creative solutions can make a big difference.

- **Do they need more structure with homework?** Some teens just can't handle having too much freedom about when and where to do their work. Establishing a scheduled homework time can help.
- **Do they have difficulty remembering what they have for homework?** Teens who are disorganized often misplace their papers or forget to bring their work home. Identify strategies to help your teen get more organized.
- **Do they forget to write down their assignments?** Some teens try to remember all of their assignments without an assignment book. Other teens forget to write their assignments down. Having your teen write down their work and asking the teacher to initial it after each class can ensure that their assignments are written down.
- **Do they need extra help?** Many teens are afraid to ask for help because they are embarrassed or they just don't understand, even when the teacher tries to explain the

concepts again. Staying after school for extra help, meeting with a tutor, or joining a homework club can be helpful strategies for many students.

- **Are they just not motivated to do their work?** Sometimes teens just aren't all that motivated to complete their work. They may have lost interest or are just bored with a particular subject. Discuss strategies that will help motivate your teen to get their work done.