

Help Wanted!

Building Skills for Job Success

Max and Jennifer have different plans for life after high school. Max wants to go to college, while Jennifer hopes to get a job right away. But both teens will need the same kinds of skills to succeed.

How can your children work on the skills they need for school and work in the 21st century? Use this guide to find out.



be cautious online and never give out her full name, age, address, or phone number to people she doesn't know.

Collaboration

Your teen will meet many different people in the workplace. Knowing how to get along with others and work together toward a common goal will be important. Here are a few ways you can help her develop these skills:



- Use household chores to demonstrate the importance of pulling her own weight. Together, draw up a list of chores, divide the tasks, and create a chore chart. When each week's jobs are done, celebrate as a family with a game of Trivial Pursuit or a trip to the ice cream shop.

- Encourage your high schooler to join a team sport. Working with

a coach and other players will give her a chance to learn team-building skills. Praise her when her team spirit shines (for example, when she assists with a goal or sets up a spike for a teammate). Let her hear you congratulate the entire squad, win or lose, on their *team effort*.

- When your teenager has a group project, help her get off to a good start by offering your home for a project kickoff meeting. Beforehand, encourage her to plan an agenda of the items to discuss (materials needed, tasks to be completed, timeline, who will be responsible for what).

- Your child may already love to text or "friend" classmates on Facebook, but did you know she can also use social media to learn to collaborate with others? Say she needs to take pictures of unusual pets for photography class. She could text friends or post a request on Facebook. *Note:* Be sure to remind her to

Communication

Whether interviewing for a job, participating in a meeting, or writing a memo or proposal, your teen needs solid oral and written communication skills. Try these ideas:

- Help your high schooler learn the art of persuasion. There will be times when he has to present his ideas clearly and effectively to coworkers and employers. Give him opportunities to practice at home. For example, you might ask him to give a two-minute speech explaining why you should let him have a later curfew on weekends. Or he could write, in 200 words or less, reasons that he should be allowed to have a party at your house after the prom.

- Review "body language" basics. Demonstrate how to shake hands firmly and look a person in the eye. Explain the importance of being an active listener—he can nod occasionally, smile, and follow up on what the person said to show the speaker he is listening. Also, let him know it's probably time to end a conversation if the other person seems distracted, is looking away, or is just answering, "Uh-huh."

- Encourage your teen to use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation all the time. Even casual e-mails and postings on social media sites are a great opportunity to practice good writing. He can begin by using complete words rather than abbreviations and using spell-check before hitting the send button. Recommend that he proofread school papers carefully, making sure that he always presents his best work.



Information literacy

Teens must be able to find and use information in print and online throughout high school and after they graduate. You can help your child learn how to separate fact from fiction and choose reliable sources:

- Just because something is in print or online, it isn't necessarily true. Help your high schooler learn to evaluate sources of information. For example, Internet educational sites (.edu), organization sites (.org), and government sites (.gov) are better bets than sites filled with ads. Also, encourage her to analyze print or online advertisements carefully. What sounds like a good deal at first glance may end up costing more money in the long run (for example, a gym where you have to commit to a year's membership and pay monthly whether you go or not).

- Suggest that your high schooler check an author's credentials. Typing the writer's name into an online search engine like www.yahoo.com or www.ask.com will call up background information about the person so she can see if his education, training, and experience make him qualified to write about a particular subject.

- Emphasize the importance of verifying facts. By finding at least two respected sources for a fact, your teen can be more confident that the information is correct. Recommend that she check an author's bibliography or review multiple online newspapers for related stories.



have originally thought of. If he wants to be a musician, but his counselor suggests a career in sound engineering or music education, encourage him to look into the new ideas. He might

list the pros and cons of each choice on a separate piece of paper. Then, he can compare them and pick the one with the most pros.

Global awareness

Many careers will require your teen to have knowledge of the world beyond our borders. He may do business in China, talk to a call center in India, or enter the Foreign Service. Here are some ways to help him prepare:

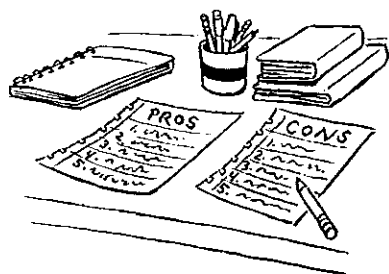
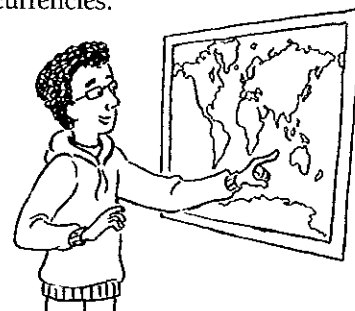
- Encourage him to study a foreign language throughout high school and use it at home as much as possible. If he takes Spanish, ask him to read and translate signs and directions that you see. Talk about the culture of the countries where the language is spoken. If your high school has a foreign-exchange program, consider hosting a student from abroad. Your teen will be introduced to another way of life in an everyday, friendly way.

- Expose him to world news. Subscribe to a daily newspaper, and point out articles from different regions. Your child can also read online editions of international papers or websites of global television networks (try www.global.nytimes.com, www.cnn.com, or www.bbc.com). Pick a news story (example: an oil spill off the coast of Africa), and together look at how newspapers in different countries approach the same topic. What do those differences tell him about the countries?

- Bring home books about different areas. As simple as it seems, a large picture book about the people and traditions of Japan or Germany sitting on your coffee table may spark your teen's interest in other parts of the world.

- In the car or at dinner, launch conversations about how things change when you cross borders. For example, if your teen eventually does business with other countries, he'll need to understand different currencies.

Have him use an online currency converter (www.oanda.com/currency/converter/) to see how far his allowance would go in Brazil or England, for instance.



Problem solving

While your teen may want your help in fixing problems, learning to solve them on his own is key to becoming an independent adult and a valuable

member of the workforce. Try these strategies:

- When he has a problem, suggest that he tackle it by setting a specific goal. For example, "Bring my English grade up to a B" is more helpful than "Do better in English."

- Ask him to write down every idea he can think of to move closer to a goal. Say he wants to get a part-time job after school. He might list, "Write my resume," "Ask three teachers and coaches to be references," "Look at the mall for openings," and "Fill out applications." Encourage him to develop a plan of action with a timeline for each step.

- Stress the importance of keeping an open mind. Your teen should consider all of his options—even ones he may not

High School Years