

# Parents Still Make the Difference!



## Keep tabs on your teenager's computer & cell phone usage

A recent survey found that teens spend about two hours per day online--80% of which is spent using a social networking site like Facebook. Another study found that half of teens send 50 or more text messages a day--roughly 1,500 each month!

With statistics like these, it's a wonder that teens get any schoolwork completed at all! Make sure that your teen's grades don't fall by setting limits on computer and cell phone use. Here's how:

- Talk to your teen about his computer and cell phone usage. Ask him how much time he thinks he spends on computer tasks that aren't school related, and how many texts he sends a month.
- Check his estimates. You can get his cell phone usage from the phone company. For his computer use, ask him to keep a log of each site he visits, and how long he spends at each one. He might be surprised!
- Be realistic. Your teen really doesn't need his phone while he's supposed to be sleeping. Consider having him "turn in" his phone at bedtime. That simple limit will decrease those texts while improving his quality of sleep. For the computer, think about a simple exchange: For every 30 minutes he reads, your teen can have 30 minutes of computer time to do things not related to schoolwork.

## Researchers ask teenagers to name their biggest role models

For years, researchers have been asking teens whom they look up to as their "biggest role model." And for years, teens have been answering that question by naming their parents!

It may be kind of a shock to hear that the same kids who commonly tell their parents, "You just don't understand!" also look up to their parents more than anyone else in their lives.

In fact, parents are so often listed as teens' most important role models that this year researchers actually asked teens to list someone other than their parents as their role model.

And researchers found that family still came first! Here are the results:

- 37% of teens named a family member other than their parents as the person they look up to most (typically a grandparent).
- 11% named a teacher or coach.
- 9% listed friends.
- 6% responded with a pastor or other religious figure.

That means that a whopping two-thirds of teens named someone they know personally as their greatest influence. (The remaining one-third named a famous person.)

So how do today's teens go about choosing their role models? Teens look for:

- Personality traits of that person (such as caring for others, being courageous or being fun).
- Wanting to "follow in that person's footsteps."
- Encouragement--that person helps a teen "be a better person" or supports her goals for the future.

## Teach your teen the importance of respect for teachers, coaches

Ask teachers about their biggest frustration and you may get a surprising answer. It's not the working hours or the pay. Instead, it's the feeling that they aren't treated with respect.

Most high school students say they want to be treated with respect. But when it comes to their teachers, teens admit that they and their peers often don't extend that same respect to them.

That's a place where you, as a parent, can make a difference. Your teen should know that you expect her to treat teachers and coaches with respect.

Remind your teen that she shouldn't forget her manners when she leaves the house. The same behaviors you expect of her at home are things she should display at school. You wouldn't let her speak rudely to you--so she shouldn't speak that way to a teacher.

Talk to your teen about what respectful behavior looks like. Your teen can show respect to teachers in simple ways--waiting her turn to speak in class, coming to school prepared and arriving on time.

Be a good role model. You may not always agree with everything a teacher or coach does. But you should model ways to disagree without being disagreeable.