

# Communication and your 13- to 18-Year-Old

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During this period, teens spend much of the day outside the home — at school or at after-school activities or jobs and with their friends. But it's important to try to talk with your teen every day to share opinions, ideas, and information.

Here are a few tips to help you communicate with your teen:

- Make time during the day or evening to hear about your teen's activities; be sure that he or she knows you are actively interested and listening carefully.
- Remember to talk *with* your teen, not *at* him or her.
- Ask questions that go beyond "yes" or "no" answers to prompt more developed conversation.
- Take advantage of time during car trips to talk with your teen.
- Make time for sporting and school events, playing games, and talking about current events.

## Vocabulary and Communication

Teens essentially communicate as adults, with increasing maturity throughout high school. They comprehend abstract language, such as idioms, figurative language, and metaphors. Explanations may become more figurative and less literal.

Teens should be able to process texts and abstract meaning, relate word meanings and contexts, understand punctuation, and form complex syntactic structures. However, communication is more than the use and understanding of words; it also includes how teens think of themselves, their peers, and authority figures.

As teens seek independence from family and establish their own identity, they begin thinking abstractly and become concerned with moral issues. All of this shapes the way they think and communicate.

## If You Suspect a Problem

You should have ongoing communication with your teen's teachers about overall language skills and progress. If the teachers suspect a language-based learning disability, comprehensive testing will be necessary. This can include a hearing test, psychoeducational assessment (standardized testing to assess learning style as well as cognitive processes), and speech-language evaluation.

A teen with a specific communication difficulty, such as stuttering, should be referred to the school speech-language pathologist (an expert who evaluates and treats speech and language disorders).

Vocal-quality problems such as hoarseness, breathiness, or raspiness may require a medical evaluation by an otolaryngologist (an ear, nose, and throat specialist).



But in most cases, language difficulties will have been identified before this age. However, increasing academic troubles might indicate subtle problems.

Parents often feel that the teen years are a time of difficult communication, when it's normal for teens to challenge parents and resist authority. However, behavior that causes severe disruption in the household may not be normal teen rebellion. If you feel that your relationship is particularly difficult, discuss it with your doctor.

[http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/communication/comm\\_13\\_to\\_18.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/communication/comm_13_to_18.html)

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