

A cluster of colorful speech bubbles in the top right corner, each containing a white question mark. The bubbles are in shades of teal, purple, pink, green, and yellow.

# COACHING YOUR TEENAGER...

**Helping them get the best out of school and college**

Age 14 – 19yrs



*help!*

*He can spell  
better than me!!*

*I'm sure my daughter  
doesn't want my help*

*I don't feel I have  
the confidence to help  
and I can't find the time*



*My job is done, they are  
studying for their exams*



*He will never  
listen to me!*



## *...but what can I do?*

We all want the best for our children but as they grow older it can get more difficult as their learning changes and they want to be more independent.

This booklet can help you find new ways to coach your teenager, whether you are a parent, carer or other family member. It is not about telling them what to do, or doing it for them, it is about helping them find ways to help themselves.



## Helping your teenager with their studies

This booklet is designed to help you help your teenager.

You can coach and motivate your teenager to help them get the best out of their time at school and college. Your own experiences are valuable. By sharing them with your teenager you can help them tackle challenges in different ways.

Parents and carers who work together with their teenager can help them focus on their future goals, stay positive and keep on track to make the most of their future.

## You have the skills to make a difference to your child's future

This booklet will help you find ways to coach your teenager by giving you:

- tips and advice
- suggestions for 'conversation starters'
- ideas on ways you can draw on your own experience
- information about where you can find out more
- most importantly, the confidence to get involved and work as a team!


# You're not alone...

## Ways to help your teenager with their learning:

- conversations
- questions
- listening
- ideas
- understanding



**...support is here for you**



My teenager learns a lot  
at school, I'm not sure how much  
I should get involved...

# Your involvement is key

Learning is the route to success for the future. It's worth investing in.

Imagine how your child might feel and what they might achieve if you regularly helped them. Together you can work out how to approach their studies and the important choices they make at school or college.


## Conversation Starters

*"I'd like to know more about your school/college project, what have you been asked to do?"*

*"Parents' evening is coming up. What could I ask your teachers about to help with your studies?"*

## Top Tips

- Teenagers need support on their own terms – be open to their ideas and how they want you to help them
- Look for opportunities to open up discussions on issues or subjects
- Ask your teenager what they are studying and what they find hard – try to work out together how you can help
- Talk to your teenager about information their school or college may have provided
- You can talk to staff directly but make sure you think about how your teenager will feel about this

A photograph of a man and a young boy in a kitchen. The man, on the left, is wearing a light blue t-shirt and jeans, leaning over a wooden table with his hand on his chin, looking at a document. The boy, on the right, is wearing a grey t-shirt and is also looking at the document with a thoughtful expression. In the background, there is a kitchen counter with a loaf of bread, a glass bottle, and some potted plants. A speech bubble is drawn above the boy's head.

I'm not sure I understand the subjects my kids are studying but I still want to help...

# You don't need to understand every subject to be able to help

By talking to your teenager about the subjects they are studying you will be able to get a better understanding and be able to help them out.

Recognise and talk about where you're both making progress and build on it.

## Conversation Starters

*"Have you got much homework tonight? Tell me about it. Let's see if there's anything I might be able to help you with."*

*"You did really well with that project/homework/test recently – let's have a look at what's coming up and have a think about what we can work on together next."*

## Top Tips

- It may seem difficult at first, but breaking down what needs to be done into small chunks will make it easier for both of you
- Visit [www.direct.gov.uk/curriculum](http://www.direct.gov.uk/curriculum) to find out more about qualifications, exams and the subjects your teenager is studying
- Phone or email the school or college for information on the subjects you would like to know about
- Go to parents' evenings and ask what you can do to help with homework and revision
- Your school or college may have other resources available for you to use, or you can get them from their website



# You can always help!

As a parent you already have lots of experience and you know your teenager better than anyone else.

Tell your teenager about your learning experiences and how you made decisions about your education and work.

Be open and share information.

## Conversation Starters

*“That looks interesting, what are you doing?”*

*“You look like you might be a bit stuck; let’s see if we can sort this out together.”*

*“What’s new or different about this project? Tell me about how you’re going to tackle that.”*

## Top Tips

- Always encourage your teenager not to give up. Remind them about what they’ve already achieved
- Share tips about how you go about learning something new
- Tell your teenager about what helped you make choices about your educational and work



I know homework is important but I'm too busy working to be able to find the time to help...

# Even if you can spare a few minutes it can make a big difference

Investing the time to help your teenager will pay off! They are more likely to succeed in their school work and exams with your help.

Regularly taking an interest and having quick chats may work better than trying to do too much in one go.

## **Conversation Starters**

*"I know you've got exams coming up. Should we sit down and look at what you've got to do and try to come up with a bit of a plan?"*

*"Why don't we talk about your new project on the way into town?"*

## **Top Tips**

- Make time to talk about homework with your teenager. It will help them to see you as a source of strength and encouragement
- Encourage your teenager to find a regular time to study and make sure that they don't feel like they're missing out on other family activities
- Make time at the weekend to help with longer study projects
- Little and often works best



I want my teenager to be happy about school, what can I do to help...?

# Encouraging learning at home can help your teenager feel good about their education

Being there for them when they are doing their homework will help them stay motivated. You can also encourage them to find their own answers to problems. Remember to tell your teenager how proud you are of them.

## Conversation Starters

*“OK, I know you want to go out and that’s fine, but let’s agree when you are going to do your homework first.”*

*“You will be deciding your subject/career choices soon, have you started to think about which ones you want to do? Tell me more about them.”*

*“I think you’re doing really well at school/college and I’m really proud of you. Let’s do something nice together; what would you like to do...?”*

## Top Tips

- Be positive, even if they get it wrong. Tell them about when you made mistakes and help them to find a way forward
- Share your experiences of school or college with your teenager
- Ask them about what they enjoy about learning
- Remember to tell your teenager about how well they are doing
- Your teenager will always need your support. Listening to them is more important than knowing all the answers

# Real life experiences

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*“I didn’t think I could keep up with homework now my son is doing his GCSEs, but now we’ve got into a good routine and it seems to be helping him. We use the computer and have a good look round the Internet; we can usually find what we need quite quickly.”*


Rosie, mum of Ryan aged 15

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*“I didn’t realise how much I could help by sharing my own experiences of when I was at school. Even suggesting little things like not trying to do too much at once has made a difference to my daughter’s revision for her exams.”*

Charlotte, mum of Suzanna aged 19

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*“Being there to help my daughter has made our relationship even stronger. I actually look forward to homework time myself and get really interested in the projects. It feels really good that I can be there to help and I know my daughter sees me as a sounding board for ideas and she can talk through her worries. We make a great team!”*

Paul, dad of Esther aged 14

*“I’ve found Sam’s school really helpful. I did feel nervous about contacting them at first because I wasn’t sure what to say or what they would expect me to do, but once I’d spoken to Sam’s teacher it was really easy to keep in contact. They’re really nice and make everything so much clearer, as they took the time to explain about the subjects and the curriculum.”*

John, dad of Sam aged 16



*“Being able to give Christy some practical help with his projects makes me feel that I’m there for him and I’m helping him do something towards his future. I’m pleased with how much I’ve helped him over the last two years and I can see how much his confidence has grown around school.”*

Fiona, mum of Christy aged 14

*“Even though I work full-time I still manage to help my son with his schoolwork. Sometimes I can only give a few minutes but because we’ve got our routine going we don’t waste time and we get started straight away. Sometimes, if we need to spend a bit longer on unpicking something, we decide when we’ll sort this out. It’s usually at weekends but we tend to combine it with a pizza or a cake as a bit of a treat for when we’ve cracked it!”*

Mick, dad of Neil aged 15



# Useful Websites

If you can't seem to get conversations going, take the pressure off yourself and think about trying a different approach. Other parents you know may be able to help, or you could get support from online groups like Netmums or Dadtalk (please see the list below). You can also call Parentline Plus anytime on 0800 800 2222 (free from landlines and most mobiles) or get tips on the [www.gotateenager.org.uk](http://www.gotateenager.org.uk) website.

## **Your teenager's learning:**

[www.bbc.co.uk/learning](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning)

[www.bbc.co.uk/schools](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools)

[www.channel4learning.com](http://www.channel4learning.com)

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/educationandlearning](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/educationandlearning)

[www.direct.gov.uk/curriculum](http://www.direct.gov.uk/curriculum)

[www.qcda.gov.uk](http://www.qcda.gov.uk)

[www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/At-Home](http://www.nextgenerationlearning.org.uk/At-Home)

## **Career and learning choices:**

[www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk](http://www.careersadvice.direct.gov.uk)

[www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

[www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Parents.aspx](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/Parents.aspx)

## **Parenting websites:**

[www.dadtalk.co.uk](http://www.dadtalk.co.uk)

[www.fostering.org.uk](http://www.fostering.org.uk)

[www.gotateenager.org.uk](http://www.gotateenager.org.uk)

[www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

[www.parentchannel.tv](http://www.parentchannel.tv)

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

This is by no means an exhaustive list and has been produced to offer a flavour of the types of websites available. Your school may have other resources available for you to use, or you could get them from their website. You could also ask other parents and family members for support and advice on helping your teenager with their learning.

DCSf cannot be held responsible for any existing or future content on any of the above websites. The contents of this document can be photocopied.

**To print off copies of this document and other resources please visit: [www.direct.gov.uk/homeworksupport](http://www.direct.gov.uk/homeworksupport)**