

Jobs that work for teenagers

A lot of ninth graders are looking forward to finding jobs so they can earn money of their own. And many parents believe that weekend and after-school jobs can help teach kids discipline and responsibility. But not all teen jobs are such a great idea. Let these guidelines help you decide whether a job is right for your child:

- The work is 15 or fewer hours per week.
- The job is meaningful work that relates to your teen’s interests and future goals.
- Your teen learns more than she earns—that is, the job gives her chances to learn and practice valuable skills.
- Your teen saves at least 25% of what he earns—and says “no” to credit-card offers!
- The work is legal and safe.

Not working more than 15 hours a week is a key point. For one thing, your teen needs time, energy, and rest to succeed in school. For another, there are dangers in too much work at this age: Studies show that teens who work more than 20 hours a week are more likely to use alcohol and drugs and smoke cigarettes; they are more likely to be sexually active, and more likely to be emotionally distressed than teens who don’t work or work fewer hours. (*Journal of the American Medical Association*, 1997) So talk to your teenager about the risks as well as the benefits of taking that after-school job.

Did you know? Your student can earn college credit while still in high school!

Advanced Placement—after completing an AP class at the high school, students can take a test and may earn college credits in that subject.

College in the high school—qualified students earn both high school and college credit for successfully finishing certain enriched and challenging classes at the high school.

Running Start—qualified juniors and seniors can earn both high school and college credits for classes taken at local community colleges.

Tech Prep—after HS graduation, students can get community/technical college credit for certain professional and technical classes taken at the high school.

DEVELOPMENTAL OVERVIEW OF THE HIGH-SCHOOL YEARS

	9th Grade	10th Grade
Physical	Girls are ahead of boys in physical maturity; sexual energy is increasing. <i>Do I look right? Do I dress right? Am I normal or am I weird?</i>	Boys are beginning to catch up. Anything within normal is OK; anything not normal is terrible. Boys are concerned with “bulking up.” Girls are concerned with body image and may start to develop eating disorders. Lots of sexual energy.
Mental / Academic	Getting better at abstract thinking. Need new ways of relating to teachers. Still need to work on organization, study skills, etc., for HS level work.	Getting into the swing of HS schoolwork. Still unsure about how to relate to adults. <i>How much does school-work really matter to me?</i>
Social	HS has many new people and new groups. 9th graders anxious about finding their new places in HS social structures. <i>Who do I talk to? Who do I sit with at lunch? Where do I fit in?</i>	Social groups shifting—natural groupings vs. shared interests. Decisions about joining groups (e.g., “party scene”). <i>I have people to hang out with, but are they real friends? What group am I part of/do I want to be part of?</i>
Friendships	Anxiety about finding new friends. Looking for people to hang around with. Groups form based on similarities. <i>Will I make new friends? Will I/should I keep old friends?</i>	Concern about friends and friendships. Friends increasingly important as family relationships shift. <i>Life would be super if only I had a boyfriend/girlfriend.</i>
Personal Identity	Self-consciousness. Grief and loneliness about loss of middle school self. Confused identity (compared to MS). Sexual identity taking shape. <i>Who am I really?</i>	Concern about identity, especially sexuality. Extreme self-consciousness. <i>Who am I, other than not my parents? Am I in charge of myself? Do I like what I am?</i>
Family Relationships	Starting to feel need for new relationships with parents. New look at past family events. More talking with friends about family situations.	Can’t wait to get driver’s license. Starting serious re-negotiation of parent’s roles. Much more talking with friends about parent and family issues.

Based on Michael Riera, Ph.D., *Uncommon Sense for Parents with Teenagers*, 2004.