

Preparing your teen for boarding school

12 - 18 YEARS

Going to boarding school is a big step for teens and families alike. These tips will help your teen get ready and make boarding school a positive learning experience!



Talk about it

Talk to your teen about how they are feeling about going to boarding school and being away from home – they may be excited, anxious, or both! Let your teen know that it is normal to be nervous, and other kids will be feeling the same way. It might help to make a list of the things they're looking forward to and the things they're worried about. Talk through any concerns and help your teen identify strategies to deal with them. Reassure your teen that boarding schools are very good at welcoming new students and helping them settle in.

Be positive

If you are struggling with the idea of your teen going away for school, try to be positive and enthusiastic when talking with your teen so that your feelings don't rub off on them. Teens are very adaptable, and with support and time, most will grow to love the experience of boarding school and the friendships they make there.

Get organised

A great way to get your teen thinking about the practical side of boarding school life is to involve them with the preparation and packing. Start by carefully reading together any information from the school about what your teen should and shouldn't bring. Together, work out what you'll need to buy, and then get everything well before your teen needs to be packed. Encourage them to take a few photos and mementoes from home too – they will be more comfortable and ready to learn if they feel at home while at boarding school.

Encourage independence

At boarding school your teen will be responsible for organising themselves and their belongings (perhaps for the first time). Begin this responsibility now – put them in charge of making a list of the things they are taking, and making sure everything is labelled. Find out what housework your teen will need to do for themselves, and give them opportunities to practise these tasks at home – eg making their bed, using a washing machine and dryer, and folding and ironing their clothes.

Make plans for keeping in contact

It's normal for teens to feel homesick when they go away for school, but it doesn't have to affect their learning. Knowing when you will be in contact helps, so make a plan for how you'll keep in touch in between visits using email, letters, Skype or phone calls. They might like to make a calendar showing when you will be seeing each other over the term.

Encourage healthy learning habits

Talk to your teen about the things they can do at boarding school to support their learning, like eating healthily, being active, balancing study and leisure time, and getting enough sleep. Show your teen how to prepare nutritious snacks for themselves, like eggs on toast, vegetable sticks or fruit with yoghurt.

Plan for some planning

The school will probably arrange dedicated time for after-school study, and guide your teen to manage their workload. You can help by showing your teen how to develop a timetable of weekly activities, and a calendar with dates of assignments and tests. Find out who your teen should talk to if they are struggling with anything at school, and encourage them to do so.

Prepare for tough times

Almost all kids will encounter problems during their time at school – stress over homework, friendship problems, physical changes, feeling lost in a subject or even just trouble seeing the whiteboard (a sign that they might need glasses). It's harder to pick up the signs when you don't see your teen every day, so prepare them ahead of time by talking to your teen about how:

- everyone at school has problems from time to time – it's nothing to be ashamed about
- different people can help us with different problems
- sometimes we just need to talk over things with someone, and that's okay
- we shouldn't feel embarrassed or afraid to ask for help
- you're always available to help them, or just talk over things that are on their mind
- you won't mind if they talk to other people too.

Then do some research together to find a few people (or positions) at the school who they can reach out to if they are struggling with anything.

Toolkits:

[School \(/explore-by-toolkit/school\)](#)

[Wellbeing \(/explore-by-toolkit/wellbeing\)](#)

Tags: [boarding \(/taxonomy/term/45\)](#) [starting school \(/taxonomy/term/38\)](#) [transitions \(/taxonomy/term/43\)](#)

Last modified: 22 October 2020