

How to **Stop** Truancy: 60 Tips for Parents

Truancy is a problem for every country with compulsory schooling, especially for kids between 12 and the age of leaving school. Views differ on the best way to deal with truancy. Some say truants need encouragement and special support, others that they should be punished to force them into the classroom. Some argue that many kids need more practical (vocational) lessons and work experience to get them ready for jobs, and that this would reduce truancy. But very often the moms and dads are blamed for not making the kids go to school.



Dealing with truancy is not fun for the parent, teacher or school administrator, but it is a necessary part of modern education. Unchecked truancy often results in legal problems for the child, but it can also affect parents as well. Avoid these unnecessary and unpleasant situations by (a) getting to know the issue, (b) getting to know your youngster, and (c) getting to know your youngster's school in order to more effectively fight truancy.

Here are 60 ways to get your child to attend school on a regular basis:

1. Take an active interest in your kid's schoolwork. Ask them to demonstrate what they learned in school. Know the kids your youngster associates with.
2. Ask your youngster her thoughts on truancy.
3. Volunteer to be a mentor and help kids address needs not currently supported in school such as music, athletics, the arts, or even poetry.
4. Look for early signs of a youngster's decision that school is not worthwhile. Monitor changes in friendships, teachers, or classrooms or even the loss of a pet or family member. All of these things contribute to reasons why kids dread going to school.
5. Prepare your youngster for school with required supplies and clothes. If you need assistance, contact your local social services agency.
6. Regularly contact the school office to make sure your youngster is attending school. Check in with his or her teachers on a regular basis. Make random visits to your youngster's classroom to observe.
7. Encourage your youngster to take an active role in the school by joining clubs or participating in sports. Teach them when and how to ask for help.
8. Ask your youngster how you can help. Think about what situations he or she might face and talk about ways to handle these situations before they occur.
9. Consider counseling in you, the parent, cannot resolve the issue on your own.
10. Contact the administrator of the school, or the school district administrator responsible for attendance or truancy. Learn the school district's supervisory chain of command, and try to

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resolve the problem at the level closest to the student involved.

11. Contact the local juvenile court that manages the truancy petition process. Determine how your youngster's situation fits the attendance and truancy policies and procedures.
12. Coordinate with the school. Parents can't do it alone. Whether it's arranging to have someone meet the parent on the playground to escort the youngster into school, or trying to ease the amount of makeup work, it's crucial that the school plays a role in integrating the youngster into the classroom.
13. Create a contract, set some boundaries, and make it more worth his while to go to school.
14. Seek other parents or older kids who are willing to help you and your youngster with homework. Make your home the homework center or develop a telephone tree to make help available to all neighborhood kids and their parents.
15. Discuss with your youngster the reasons she has been truant.
16. **Don't** arrange homebound teaching.
17. **Don't** ask for a change of teacher or classes.
18. **Don't** excuse your youngster from school.
19. **Don't** focus on your youngster's anxiety.
20. **Don't** give mixed messages by giving in sometimes.
21. **Don't** suddenly change expectations as new demands will precipitate anxiety.
22. **Don't** tell your youngster that he/she does not have to participate in school activities or does not have to attend school at all.
23. Drop your youngster at school in the morning and watching him enter the building.
24. Understand what your youngster is expected to learn at each grade level. Contact your state department of education, school district, or school for a copy of the standards and school attendance policies. Find out what goals your youngster's teacher has for the year and how your youngster will be graded.
25. Encourage your youngster to develop outside interests.
26. Establish a carpool.
27. Get support for yourself.
28. Give the consistent message, **"You will go to school."**

29. Have consistent expectations. Relaxing the rules for even one assignment or day can give a mixed message. Make sure that all your kids live up to the same standards.
30. Investigate what's going on at school. If it's an issue of bullying, parents need to find out what's really going on. Once parents know whether the youngster's complaint is a valid one, it's easier to work with the youngster around the issue, both in and outside of school.
31. Look for alternatives. If your youngster tells you he or she is bored at school, pursue support outside the school such as music lessons, sports clubs, neighborhood or church-related youth groups, or mentors. Seek out and enroll your youngster in a tutoring program, if necessary.
32. Maintain your routine. Stick to a regular schedule for homework, bedtime, and waking up.
33. Make it less fun to be at home. If your youngster knows he can sit at home and play video games during the school day, the incentive to stay home is greater than the incentive to be at school.
34. Make school relevant. Push for activities where students can take part in their own learning by developing projects to address community needs.
35. Look for negative behavior changes such as alcohol use or staying out late. Seek a counselor if your youngster's behavior becomes, distant, withdrawn, anxious, depressed, delinquent or aggressive.
36. Obtain a copy of the district's policies and procedures regarding attendance and truancy. Attendance and truancy information is often contained in the student conduct section of a district's policy manual, and is likely to be found in the Student Handbook issued by many schools. Some school districts place their policies on their Web sites.
37. Outline the punishments you will enforce if he engages in truancy.
38. **Parents should identify the issue, make a plan, and stick to their guns.** Once the youngster has overcome his fear of school, he'll probably thank you.
39. Sign up and attend parenting education programs. This is a great place to learn new techniques and to share what you have learned.
40. Plan visits to the doctor or dentist after the school day ends. If you must take an appointment during the school day, allow the youngster to miss only time needed for that appointment.
41. Always talk with the school before you plan your holiday or vacation.
42. Reward good attendance. However, keeping your youngster out of school for his or her birthday is not acceptable.
43. When your child skips a class, react immediately by insisting that your youngster attend school.

44. Read a story about how a boy or girl overcomes or copes with a fear related to school attendance.
45. Reassure the youngster that she can handle it.
46. Request meetings with teachers, if needed.
47. Rule out any medical conditions.
48. Set a time for your youngster to go to bed, wake up, have a healthy breakfast, arrive at school, and complete his/her homework. Monitor things in your home such as family routines that may prevent you or your youngster from keeping to the schedule.
49. Speak to other parents and guardians who have experienced the same issues and problems. This can be a great way to get valuable advice and information.
50. Insist that all community agencies—social workers, school counselors, or juvenile officers—work together to develop a coordinated plan of support for your youngster.
51. Seek outside assistance if necessary.
52. Set a baseline expectation. Having a youngster in school for any amount of time is better than having him at home. Though a youngster may only come to school for only an hour, or sit in the lobby all day, it's a lot easier to get them back into the regular classroom from that point.
53. Talk to your kids about the role education plays in future/ life success. Let them know that you do not approve of them missing school. Refuse to write an excuse for unacceptable reasons. Review acceptable and unacceptable behavior with your youngster.
54. Talk to neighbors about your youngster's behaviors and activities. Set up a neighborhood watch or patrol to ensure that all kids go to school every day. Exchange numbers in case you need to reach a parent quickly.
55. Know the school's attendance policy, the time school starts, the difference between an excused and unexcused absence, and share the information with your youngster.
56. Be sure that your youngster knows if he or she skips school, there will be consequences to pay such as losing television or video game time, limiting time with friends, or the loss of other privileges.
57. Talk with your youngster about acceptable and unacceptable behavior and grades. Discuss homework rules and school attendance.
58. Tell him your views on truancy.
59. Vote in local school board elections and voice your opinion about what is working or not working in schools.
- 60. Work as a team with the school and community.**