



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 8

Name: _____

Date: _____

The Teenage Body Clock

It is 11 p.m. on a school night. The lights are off, the alarm is set for 6:15, and a fourteen-year-old lies in bed, wide awake. Parents often blame phones or video games, and sometimes they are right. But scientists have found that something deeper is going on. The teenage brain actually runs on a different schedule than the brains of younger children and adults.

An Internal Clock

Every person has a circadian rhythm, an internal clock that runs on a cycle of about 24 hours. A small cluster of cells in the brain keeps this clock on time, mostly by responding to light and darkness. As evening falls, the brain releases a hormone called melatonin, which signals the body that it is time to sleep. In the morning, light tells the brain to slow melatonin production, and the body begins to wake up.

The Shift That Comes with Puberty

During the teenage years, this clock shifts. Researchers have found that in adolescents, melatonin is released later in the evening, often an hour or two later than in younger children. Scientists call this a sleep phase delay. As a result, many teenagers simply do not feel sleepy until 11 p.m. or later. Going to bed earlier does not always help, because the body is not ready to rest.

The Problem with Early Mornings

Sleep experts recommend that teenagers between 13 and 18 get 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night. A student who cannot fall asleep until 11 p.m. and wakes at 6:15 a.m. gets barely seven hours. Over weeks and months, that missing sleep adds up. Studies have linked too little sleep in teens to trouble concentrating, lower grades, mood changes, and a higher risk of car accidents among teen drivers.

What Schools Are Doing

In 2014, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended that middle and high

schools start no earlier than 8:30 a.m. In 2019, California became the first state to pass a law requiring later start times, and it took effect in 2022. Some school districts have made similar changes on their own. Not everyone agrees, however. Later start times can complicate bus routes, push after-school sports later into the evening, and clash with parents' work schedules.

What Teens Can Do

While the debate continues, teenagers can still take steps to protect their sleep. Keeping the same bedtime and wake-up time, even on weekends, helps the body clock stay steady. Getting bright light in the morning helps it reset. And because the light from screens can delay the release of melatonin, putting phones away before bed gives the brain a better chance to do its job.

Part A: Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer.

1. What is a circadian rhythm?
 - a) A type of sleep disorder
 - b) An internal clock that runs on a cycle of about 24 hours
 - c) A hormone that wakes the body up
 - d) A schedule set by schools
2. What happens to melatonin during the teenage years?
 - a) It is released later in the evening.
 - b) It stops being produced.
 - c) It is released earlier in the evening.
 - d) It is only released in the morning.
3. How much sleep do experts recommend for teenagers ages 13 to 18?
 - a) 6 to 7 hours
 - b) 7 to 8 hours
 - c) 8 to 10 hours
 - d) 11 to 12 hours
4. Which is a challenge of later school start times mentioned in the article?
 - a) Students would get too much sleep.
 - b) Teachers would need more training.
 - c) Schools would need new buildings.
 - d) Bus routes and after-school sports become harder to schedule.

Part B: True or False

Write T for true or F for false.

5. Light in the morning tells the brain to slow down melatonin production. _____
6. According to the article, going to bed earlier always solves the problem for teens. _____

7. California passed a law requiring later school start times. _____

Part C: Central Idea and Objective Summary

The central idea is the main point an author develops across a text. An objective summary restates the most important ideas briefly and fairly, without adding personal opinions.

8. State the central idea of the article. Then list two details the author uses to develop it.

9. Write a two-sentence objective summary of the article. Do not include your own opinion.

Part D: Think and Explain

10. The author presents both the reasons for later school start times and the challenges they create. Should your school start later? Support your answer with at least two pieces of evidence from the article.
