

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

A good start

Pleasant good-byes can set the tone for the day. Get in the habit of saying, "Have a terrific day!" before going off to school and work. Or give your child a high five or a hug on the way out the door. Leaving on an upbeat note will help both of you feel good about the day ahead.

Break time

Tween schedules can get busy quickly. Try leaving space between events so your youngster has time at home. That way, she'll be rested for school and more connected with family. You might let her go to a Saturday night sleepover but say no to outings earlier in the day, for example.

Win or lose

Encourage your middle grader to show good sportsmanship in victory and defeat. He can respect opposing teams by avoiding "showboating" after winning. He should also shake hands with opposing players, no matter the score. This behavior shows maturity and helps him be a well-respected player.

Worth quoting

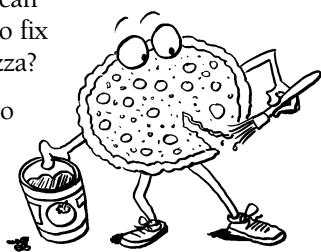
"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives."

Annie Dillard

Just for fun

Q: What can you use to fix a torn pizza?

A: Tomato paste!



Put to the test

No matter what classes your middle grader takes, she can count on one thing: tests. Knowing how to approach quizzes and exams can boost her confidence and help her do better. Share these 8 test-day tips with your child.



- 1.** Eat a healthy breakfast. Proteins and carbohydrates help you focus and give you energy, so include foods like yogurt and fruit or peanut butter on toast.
- 2.** Take your seat a few minutes early. Then you won't feel rushed when the exam begins.
- 3.** Pay close attention to directions. You may need to answer only one essay question out of three, for instance.
- 4.** Plan your time. Consider dividing the minutes available and the number of questions in half so you know where you should be by the halfway point.
- 5.** Scan each section before starting. Tackle easier sections first so you feel a sense of accomplishment.
- 6.** In the margins, jot down formulas, math facts, important dates, or other devices to jog your memory.
- 7.** If you get stuck, skip the question, and go back to it later. If you still don't know the answer, take an educated guess rather than leaving it blank.
- 8.** Review your work. Be sure you answered all questions and that your answers are legible or marked clearly. *Tip:* Stick with your first answer unless you're sure it's wrong—first instincts are often correct. 

Tween-friendly ways to be involved

Volunteering at your child's school makes you a partner in his education—when he sees that you care, he'll care more, too. Here are ways you can help:

- Send in supplies for art club meetings.
- Pass out flyers for the band fund-raiser.
- Bake cookies for the school play's cast party.
- Be a timekeeper at a cross country or track and field meet.
- Chaperone a school dance.

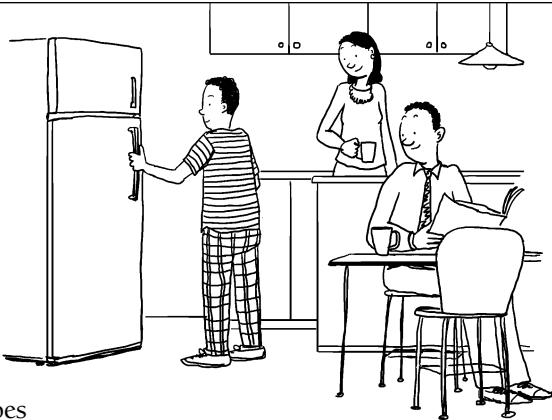


Tip: If your middle grader is uncomfortable seeing you at his activities, volunteer for others. Or work behind the scenes—you could be on a parent committee that meets while he's not even at school. 

Keeping the peace

Help your tween feel secure, and strengthen your relationship with him, by keeping things as peaceful as possible at home. Consider these ideas.

Decide "big" or "little." Your middle grader may annoy you by wearing mismatched clothes to school or joking when you want him to be serious. But pointing out everything you don't like can make him defensive and angry. Figure out what matters most in the long run, such as whether he does his best in school and is trustworthy. Then, try to keep the rest in perspective. Knowing what's really important will help you pick your battles and get along better.



this age. If you listen and show sympathy for his feelings, he'll be more likely to keep telling you things. And by having a safe place to vent, he might be able to get over disappointments more quickly.

Homework habits

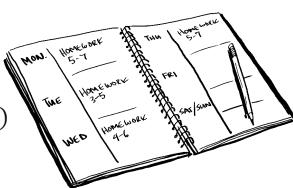
Do you ever wonder why your child has homework? Two reasons (at least): It cements the ideas she learned in school, and it lets teachers see her progress. Encourage strategies like these to help your middle grader get the most out of her homework.

Set up a space

Make sure she has a place to work with good lighting, a comfortable seat, and no distractions like TV or noisy siblings. She should stock supplies in a drawer or box so she can find them quickly.

Manage the time

Help your tween schedule her homework time—but ultimately it is her job to manage it. She should set aside a specific time each day (1–2 hours) and build in a break or two to keep her mind sharp.



Note: Make it clear that homework comes first. When she finishes, she can enjoy her hobbies or use the computer for fun.

Q & A

Q I've heard bullying peaks in middle school. How can I make sure my daughter isn't a target?

A There is no way to guarantee a child will never be bullied. But there are things you can do to help.

Since bullies are less likely to pick on someone who has friends, encourage her to get to know other students. Suggest that she join a club, and have her invite classmates over. Not only is there safety in numbers, but having friends will build her self-esteem, which in turn can discourage bullies from targeting her.

Also, talk to your daughter about bullying. Tell her that if she is bullied or sees someone else being bullied, she should seek help immediately from an adult, whether it's you, a teacher, an administrator, or a coach. Let her know that she's not expected to handle this problem alone.

Parent to Parent

More nonfiction reading

My son, Kevin, reads mostly fiction, but his language arts teacher said the class will read lots of nonfiction this year. The reason, she said, is to prepare students for high school, college, and careers, where "informational text" is important.

The teacher suggested a few ways to help at home. First, she said, we could leave the newspaper out and mention articles about topics that affect him. For example, I pointed out stories on road construction where he rides his bike and festivals we might attend.

Also, the teacher said to encourage our kids to read nonfiction books about things they're interested in. The next time I went to the library, I brought home books about car racing and a biography of one of Kevin's favorite drivers. I was happy to see him reading one rather than watching TV the other night!

He even asked to go to the library to get a book about another driver. And when we were there, he picked up a few other books about speed records and breaking the sound barrier.



OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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Listen to the "small stuff."

When your child sees pictures on Facebook of a party he wasn't invited to or finds out that the girl he likes has a crush on someone else, it may not seem crucial to you. But remember that social relationships are all-important at

