

October 2007

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops

### Stick together

You and your spouse may disagree on a discipline issue from time to time, but try to resolve your differences privately. Presenting a united front will show your middle grader that your family's rules are important. Plus, being consistent will help your child understand what you expect of him.

### Summary, please

Here's a tip to improve your child's reading comprehension and memory. When she finishes a reading assignment, ask her to tell you about it. Summarizing the text will help her remember the information. She'll also find out what she doesn't understand and needs to go over again.

**DID YOU KNOW?** The chance of being bullied rises as kids get to middle school. Encourage your youngster to tell an adult if he is bullied or witnesses someone else being bullied. If you suspect that your child has bullied another student, talk to his guidance counselor or another professional right away.

### Worth quoting

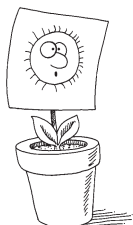
"It is not enough to have a good mind; the main thing is to use it well."

René Descartes

### Just for fun

**Q:** What happened to the plant in math class?

**A:** It grew square roots.

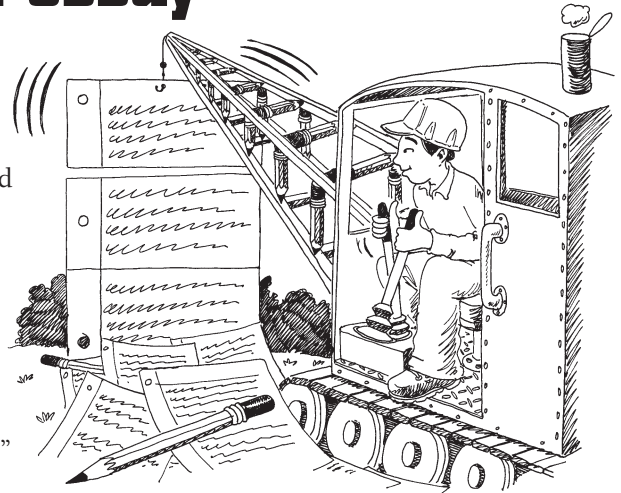


## Building an essay

When your middle grader has an essay to write, does he hit a roadblock? Suggest these strategies for turning the information he has gathered into a winning paper.

**Organize thoughts.** Encourage your child to start by writing a strong thesis, or statement of what he's trying to prove. *Example:* "The computer was one of the most important inventions of the 20th century." Then, he can jot down several main ideas (the impact on the workplace, the use of home computers, and how the computer led to the development of the Internet). Finally, have him list supporting facts for each.

**Write a draft.** The important thing at this stage is to get everything down on paper—he can polish and add details later. Remind him that an essay includes three sections. The introduction lays out the thesis and arguments he will make. The middle paragraphs should each include one main idea and at least two



to three supporting details. The conclusion sums up his argument and restates his thesis.

**Edit and revise.** Have your child review his paper carefully. *Tip:* Suggest that he let the paper sit overnight and look at it fresh the next day. Then, have him read it aloud and ask himself these questions: "Have I given facts to support each main idea?" "Are my punctuation, spelling, and grammar correct?" "Have I provided enough details?" Once he has made his revisions, he can type a final draft and hand in an essay that he can feel good about. 👍

## "I'm sorry!"

It takes a big person to say those two little words, "I'm sorry." Use these ideas to help your child learn to apologize, and you'll teach her an important skill for a lifetime:

- When you do something you regret, say so ("I'm sorry I got so mad when you broke the glass"). Your middle grader will learn from your example, and she'll see that it feels good to get an apology.
- Together, practice apologizing. Working on what to say will make it easier when she actually needs to tell someone she's sorry.
- When your youngster apologizes, let her know you're pleased. "It's good to be able to say you're sorry. I'm proud of you." 👍



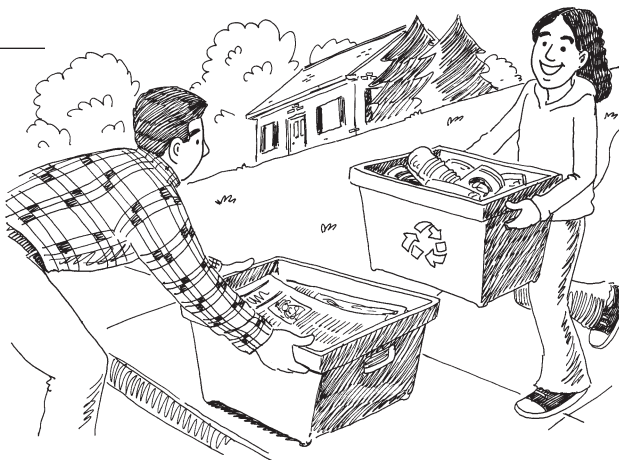
# The new 3 Rs

Teresa turns out the light when she leaves a room. Carly uses her favorite mug instead of a paper cup. Andy helps bundle newspapers for recycling.

These middle graders are all practicing the new three Rs—reduce, reuse, and recycle. You can encourage your child to help the environment, too, with these suggestions.

## Reduce

The first step is to use less stuff! When buying just a few items, say “no, thanks” to a bag and have your youngster help you carry them out. Together, look for items with less



## Recycle

Together, make a list of everything that can be recycled (aluminum cans, magazines, cardboard). Consider putting your child in charge of your household recycling. She can organize bins and label them with the items that should go in each.

*Note:* Get your middle grader in the habit of conserving resources, and she'll respect her world—and the people who live in it. 👍

packaging (bulk cereal rather than single-serve).

## Reuse

Have your middle grader get more use out of things. For example, she can refill water bottles and use both sides of computer paper. Help her fix broken or torn items (bicycles, clothing) rather than getting new ones.

## Activity

### Fun with numbers

Have a few minutes? Practice math skills with your kids. On the way to the store or in the bank drive-thru line, play this simple game of logic.



The object is to be the person to say “21.” Here's how you play.

The first player begins by saying the number 1. Then, players take turns counting to 21, saying either one, two, or three numbers at a time. Can your children figure out how to outsmart you and be the one to say 21?

*Variation:* Play the same way, but this time 21 loses. The object is to force another player to say 21.

Encourage your youngsters to explore different strategies to win (How many numbers are left? How many players are there?). 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

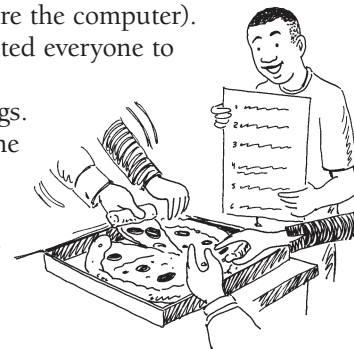
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## Parent to Parent Family meetings

As I was sitting in my weekly staff meeting at work one day, I realized my busy family needed something like this—a regular time to communicate.

My husband and I decided to start weekly family meetings to discuss ideas (plans for the weekend) or problems (how to share the computer). We posted an agenda sheet on the refrigerator and invited everyone to add items.

After a month of meetings, we've learned a few things. We give everyone a turn to talk. Then, we think over the points made and discuss decisions the following week. Also, we make sure to offer good news (“Great job on your math test!” or “Thanks for cleaning your room!”). Finally, we end each meeting with a board game or other fun activity—and, of course, pizza. 👍



## Q & A Growing up too fast

**Q** My daughter Shawna is 12 going on 17! How can we get her to act her age?

**A** Today's middle graders seem to be growing up faster than ever. To get Shawna to slow down, talk about the issues that concern you, and set limits that you both can live with.

For example, you may not want her to be alone with a boy,

but you could let her have boys and girls over when you're home. Perhaps you don't want her piercing her ears, but you'd be okay with clip-on earrings.

Try to remind Shawna that she'll be allowed to do more as she gets older. You might point out things she can do now (stay up later, go shopping with friends) that her younger sister still can't do. It's hard to be patient when you're 12, but she'll be 17 before she knows it! 👍

