

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Picture this

Help your middle grader remember what he reads by encouraging him to draw pictures. For example, while he's studying he could draw a large ball with rings around it to help him remember Saturn.

Taking turns

Divide household chores so every family member has a free evening. One person cooks, and another clears the table and washes dishes, while someone else takes a break. Sharing chores teaches teamwork and responsibility—and everybody gets a night off!

In the know

Want to know what's going on at school? Many schools maintain a Web site with up-to-date information on everything from lunch menus to the teacher-of-the-month. If your child's school doesn't have a site, contact local business leaders about sponsoring a Web page.

Worth quoting

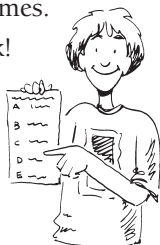
"If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders."
Abigail Van Buren

Just for fun

Student: I've done this math problem five times.

Teacher: Good work!

Student: Here are my five answers.



Back-to-school routines that work

A new school year is a great time to establish new routines. The excitement can make the first weeks hectic for the whole family. But with some preparation, your middle grader can make the switch from summer vacation to classroom activities. Try these tips to develop good routines for the year.

Start early

A couple of weeks before school starts, have your middle grader begin sticking to a school schedule (waking up earlier, regular mealtimes, quiet activities before bed). This helps him transition into the new year and also shows him that planning ahead can make things easier to handle—in school and in life.

Take charge

Middle graders must learn that growing up means accepting responsibility. Explain to your child that completing assignments is her job, not yours. Homework not finished? No excuses. While you can offer suggestions when asked, try to avoid solving her problems. Encouraging responsible behavior can help your child take charge of her learning.

Get moving

Did you know that regular exercise may increase brainpower? Working up a healthy sweat can boost learning,



increase self-confidence, and lengthen your child's attention span. Getting active is also a great way to reduce stress. Suggest that your middle grader exercise (play ball, jump rope) at least three times a week. 👍

Managing time

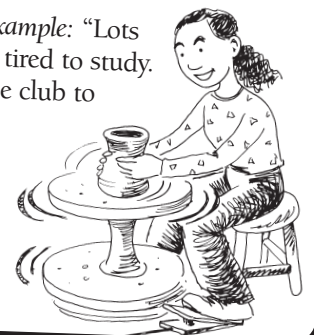
Parents know that busy schedules require them to manage time wisely. But kids need to learn how to schedule their time.

You can help. How? By setting limits on things like extracurricular activities, electronics (computer, video games, TV), and late hours.

Be specific. Example: "We're setting a limit of one hour of TV on school nights and two hours on weekend evenings."

Provide explanations. Example: "Lots of activities make you too tired to study. Why don't you choose one club to join this year?"

Enforce limits. Example: "Be home by eight o'clock, or you can't go out tomorrow evening." 👍



Q & A Reaching out to teachers

Q We've just moved to the area, and my daughter is attending a new school. How can I get to know her teachers?

A One way to establish relationships with teachers is to volunteer in the classroom. Watching teachers handle rooms full of middle graders can help you appreciate the teachers' hard work and give you the chance to meet your child's classmates.

Being involved in school activities offers you even more opportunities to talk to teachers.



You might consider chaperoning a field trip or helping with a book fair.

You can also connect—and show an interest in your child's education—by participating in the PTA (parent-teacher association). Or you might suggest that your child invite one of her teachers to your home for dinner.

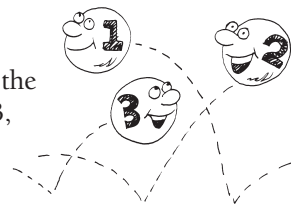
Parents and teachers both work hard to help middle graders learn and grow. Working together on any kind of project is a great way to get to know your child's teachers. 👍

Activity What's the chance ...

Try this activity to teach your middle grader about probability (the chance that something will happen).

Materials: 10 Ping-Pong balls, marker, large bowl

Have your child number the balls 1, 1, 2, 3, 4, 4, 4, 5, 6, and 6 (write one number on each ball). Place all the balls in the bowl, and let him select one.



What is the chance that the ball he chooses will have a 1 on it? Since there are two balls in the bowl of 10 with the number 1, the probability of picking a ball marked with a 1 is 2 out of 10.

Try again. What's the chance of the second ball's having a number greater than 4? There are three balls with numbers greater than 4, so the probability is 3 out of 10. 👍

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 The power of focus

My son and I are alike in many ways. So, when John started having trouble staying focused on his homework, I explained to him how I concentrate when I'm at work.

I start by sitting quietly at my desk and thinking about what I need to do. Sometimes I write down my priorities; other times I make a mental note. Either way, I try to concentrate on what I have to accomplish that day. I also try to estimate how much time each task will take so I can set realistic goals. If I get bored, I switch to a different task for a while. Mixing things up helps keep me interested.

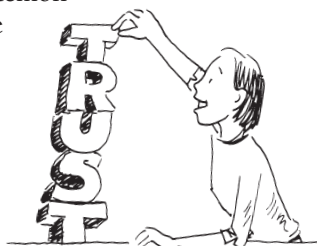
John said he'd give my ideas a try. We both had a good laugh when we decided that our favorite time of the day is lunchtime—because that's when we can daydream! 👍



Encouraging honesty

The cashier gives you too much change at the store, and your child notices. Do you say anything? You can turn this situation into an opportunity to encourage honesty. Here's how.

■ Middle graders watch what their parents do. Your actions demonstrate your beliefs. On the way home, mention the incident to your child. If you were honest with the cashier, chances are your youngster has already gotten the message.



■ Is there someone you especially trust? As you're talking, point this out to your middle grader. *Example:* "I trust Mrs. Richmond. She's always honest with me." Noting your appreciation of honest behavior emphasizes how important it is.

■ Finally, explain to your middle grader that when you catch someone lying to you, trust is broken. Let her know that rebuilding trust is difficult and can take a long time. 👍