

February 2006

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops

### Better notes

Encourage your middle grader to rewrite her class notes as part of her evening study routine. She will have a clear copy that's easy to read when she's studying, and she'll get a valuable review of what she was taught.

### Personal responsibility

To foster responsibility in your child, try not to overreact when he makes a mistake. Most mistakes bring their own consequences. *Example:* Leaving a textbook at school could mean he fails a quiz the next day. Consequences are the best teacher of what responsibility really means.

### Dating tip

Dating is a natural part of adolescent development. But most experts agree that parents should encourage group activities over one-on-one dates at this age. Your child could invite friends over to watch a movie or listen to music. Community center events or outings are another safe way for kids to hang out together.

### Worth quoting

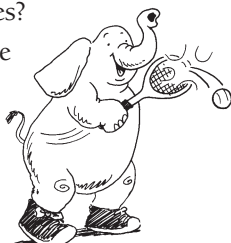
"The bond that links your true family is not one of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."

*Richard Bach*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do elephants wear blue tennis shoes?

**A:** Because white ones always get dirty.



## Respect: The 4th R

Treating the people around him with respect is one of the most important lessons your child can learn. Like many qualities, respect must be taught—and it begins at home.

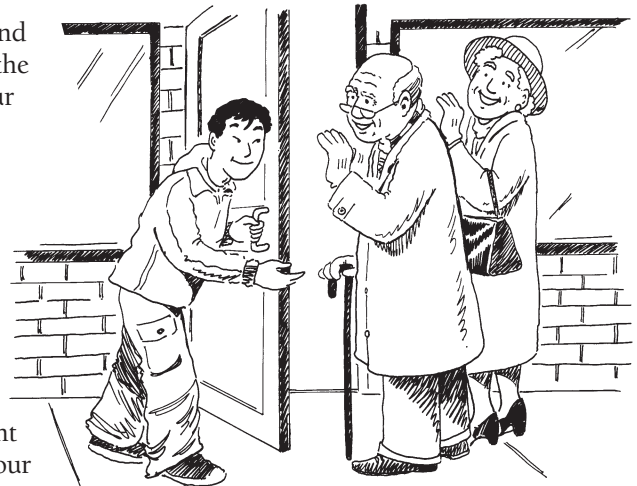
Consider these ideas to encourage your middle grader to show consideration for others.

### Be a teacher

Use opportunities to point out respectful behavior to your child. Knocking before opening a closed door and remaining quiet while someone else is talking are two examples. Likewise, when you hear somebody making fun of the way another person looks or speaks, don't ignore it. Say to your child, "That was rude. I'm sure it hurt her feelings." Remind your middle grader that others will often treat him the way he treats them.


### Be a model

Middle graders are quick studies when it comes to life. What they see is what they learn. If you deliberately embarrass your child in front of his




friends or invade his privacy for no reason, he will get the idea that actions like these are acceptable. If you treat him respectfully, he is apt to follow your lead.

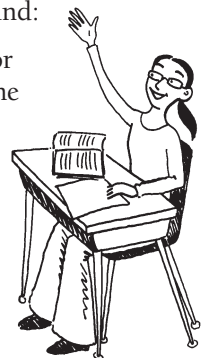
### Be a guide

Make it clear that harsh words and insults are never allowed. When your middle grader loses his cool and behaves disrespectfully, suggest he take a break. Tell him you'll listen to him when he calms down. Letting him know that you won't tolerate disrespect provides the guidance he needs to change his behavior. 

## Attendance matters!

Children need to know that attending class each day is a vital part of their education. You can help your child by keeping these tips in mind:

- Insist that homework be completed each night. It's easier for your middle grader to feel good about going to school when she keeps up with her work.
- Schedule dental visits and other appointments after school hours whenever possible.
- If your school doesn't already notify you of absences, ask to be called at home or work if your middle grader isn't in class.
- Obtain a copy of the school's absence policy, and discuss it with your child. 



# Motivation to read

When it comes to reading, some middle graders read textbooks and little else. But they often don't realize that becoming a good reader is an essential part of school success—and can lead to a lifetime of learning.

Try these ideas to spark your child's excitement for reading and boost her reading skills:

- Suggest book series. Most series introduce a central character that your middle grader can follow through new adventures in each book. *Ideas: The Boxcar Children* by Gertrude Chandler Warner, *Goosebumps* by R. L. Stine.
- Consider books that have been made into films. Try *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis or *A Series of*

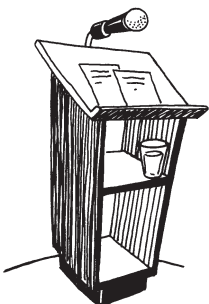


*Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snicket. Being familiar with the characters may draw your child into picking up the book. She might even decide that she likes the book better than the movie!

- Short stories are especially appealing because they can be read in one sitting. Look for collections such as *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar and Six More* by Roald Dahl and *Every Living Thing* by Cynthia Rylant. 👍



## Speaking in public



Children often dread giving oral presentations. Share these tips to improve your middle grader's public speaking skills.

**Have a purpose.** Prepare one or two main points for your presentation. If you can get these ideas across to your audience, you're apt to be successful.

**Make eye contact.** Look classmates in the eye while talking. Eye contact is a good way to connect with your audience and help you to be less nervous.

**Think positively.** A big part of success is believing in yourself. Repeat "I can do this" in your head until you feel more confident.

**Remember to breathe.** A lack of oxygen can make you feel anxious. Taking a few deep breaths in the beginning will help calm jitters. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,  
a division of Aspen Publishers, Inc.  
3035 Valley Avenue, Suite 103, Winchester, VA 22601  
540-723-0322 • rfeustomer@aspenpublishers.com  
www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540

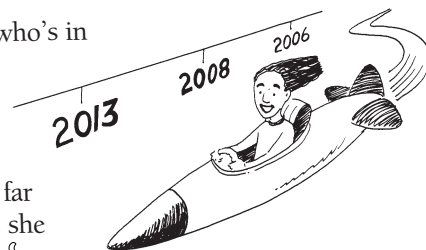
## Parent to Parent Preparing for the future

When my daughter Ann mentions graduating from high school, she talks as if it's "decades" away. Maybe it seems that way to her, but it's only a few short years from middle school to graduation.

I decided to talk with Ann about what she wants to do when she finishes high school. We made a list of her interests, including oceanography and interior design. Then, we checked out career books from the library to find out what it takes to succeed in those fields.

Next, Ann talked with an older cousin who's in college. He explained that the classes she takes now, such as biology and algebra, could help her with her education and career down the road.

Ann's realizing that the future is not as far away as she thinks—and that the choices she makes now can help her reach her goals. 👍



## Q & A Body image

**Q** My son says he's fat even though his doctor tells him that he's at a healthy body weight. Should I be concerned?

**A** It's natural for middle graders to be self-conscious about their appearance. But constantly worrying about weight could be a sign that something is wrong.

Notice your son's eating patterns. Does he eat three meals a day?

Or does he skip some meals, only to make up for them with excessive snacking later? If his eating habits suddenly change or you notice drastic weight loss, keep a closer eye on him. Focusing on food could lead to an eating disorder.

If your son continues to be concerned about his weight or you suspect an eating disorder, talk to your family doctor. 👍

