

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Listening and learning

At the library, choose a book on tape or DVD to listen to with your middle grader. Then, when you're in the car together (going to practice, picking up dinner), pop in the next installment. Talking about what you've heard will build your child's listening and conversation skills — and you'll enjoy the time together.

Recognize respect

When your child shows respect, let her know you appreciate it. For example, if she speaks politely to you even though she disagrees with what you say, you might tell her, "Thank you for talking to me with respect." You'll encourage more of the same.

Smoking stinks

Does your middle grader want bad breath or yellow teeth? Probably not. Tell him that's what he'll get from smoking, and you'll give him two big reasons for saying no to cigarettes. While parents worry about future health issues, middle schoolers may be more afraid of what can happen right now.

Worth quoting

"The time is always right to do what is right." *Martin Luther King Jr.*

Just for fun

Q: What do lazy dogs do for fun?

A: Chase parked cars.



Testing tips

"Tests are easy," some middle graders say. "It's the questions that are hard." But test questions aren't so difficult if your child understands how to handle them.

Help your middle schooler tackle tough questions by sharing these strategies.

True or false

As a general rule, a question should be answered false if any part of the statement is untrue. Suggest that your child look for words like *all*, *none*, and *always*. These may be clues that the answer is false. *Example:* "All the soldiers in the Revolutionary War were American." At the same time, words like *often* and *may* usually signal that a statement is true.

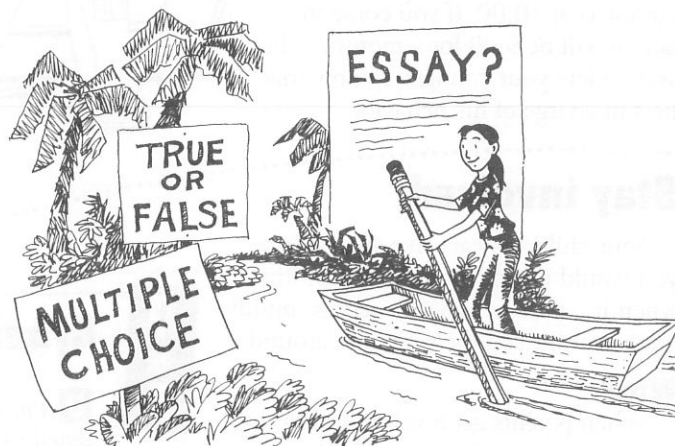
Multiple choice

With these questions, it's important that your youngster read every choice before choosing an answer. This allows

her to rule out answers she knows are wrong. Using this strategy, your child may have two options to pick from instead of five, which increases her chances of selecting the correct answer.

Essay

Encourage your middle grader to read each question at least twice before answering. Making an outline will help her organize her thoughts so her writing is clear and flows smoothly. When she's finished her essay, she should check spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. 👍



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 he keeps up with his 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 child isn't in class.
- Obtain a copy of the school's attendance policy, and discuss it with your youngster. 👍



Deciding on discipline

Disciplining middle graders can be difficult. Try these strategies to set rules that work—and help your child learn right from wrong.

● **Be clear.** Explain the rules and the consequences for breaking them in advance. *Example:* “Your curfew is at 10:00. If you come in late, it will be 9:00 for a month.” This system lets your youngster know that he’s in charge of his behavior.



● **Be fair.** Link the consequence to the action. For instance, if he listens to music and ignores his chores, you might put away his MP3 player for the night. This makes more sense to him than, say, taking away his allowance.

● **Be direct.** Limit your comments to the situation at hand. Try not to bring up things your middle schooler did last week or to use negative labels (“lazy,” “forgetful”). Staying focused will keep arguments from flaring. Plus, being calm and direct sends the message that you still love him, no matter what. 👍

Stay involved

Your child may act like she wishes you would disappear sometimes. But when it comes to school success, middle graders still need their parents around.

Why?

When parents get involved in learning, student achievement soars. Children score higher on tests, turn in better projects, and participate more in class if they know their parents care.



When?

You can be involved in your child’s learning at any time of day. Talk about homework while you’re making dinner. Watch a documentary together at night. Visit a museum on the weekend. You’ll show your youngster that you think learning is important.

Where?

Teachers will welcome your commitment, whether you help in the classroom, volunteer at evening events, or simply support your own child at home. Call or email your middle grader’s teachers to see what you can do—in or out of school—to help. 👍



Q & A

Cyberbullying

Q I’m worried about cyberbullying. How can I protect my daughter from this kind of bullying?

A Cyberbullying occurs when someone sends hurtful messages online or by cell phone. It can take many forms, such as writing rude comments, spreading rumors, and posting embarrassing pictures.

Your child can discourage cyberbullying by giving personal information (name, email address, cell phone number) only to friends. If she receives nasty emails or text messages, she should not respond. Explain that replying just gives the person the satisfaction of having upset her. A good thing to do is simply to log off the computer or turn off the cell phone.

Let your youngster know she should tell an adult if she experiences cyberbullying. You can report problems to your Internet provider, school authorities, or even the police. 👍



Parent to Parent

A reading habit

The older my son Jonathan got, the less he read. I was concerned, so I asked the school librarian for ideas.

First, Mrs. Cruz said we should leave lots of reading material—books, magazines, newspapers, even comic books—all around the house. “If they’re lying there, he’ll probably pick them up,” she advised.

Second, she suggested that I stop at the library to return books when we’re out together. Once

inside, she said, steer him toward sections he might like. Since Jonathan loves cars, I showed him books on NASCAR races and drivers. I was happy when he picked a few to check out.

Finally, Mrs. Cruz told me to discuss the books I’m reading with Jonathan. That will give him a chance to talk about what he has read that day—and give us a reading habit to share! 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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