

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Attendance tip

Send the message that skipping school is wrong. Tell your middle grader that if he cuts class, he must make up the time at home. *Suggestions:* He can do extra chores or study in his room.

Menu math

Try this idea to give your child's math muscles a workout. After ordering a meal in a restaurant, hold on to the menu. Then, have your middle grader estimate the total bill and figure out how much tip to leave.

Middle ground

"Other kids can. Why can't I?" Does your child complain that friends have more freedom than she does? Try talking to other parents. You may find that your child's friends don't have as much freedom as she thinks. But even if they do, let your middle grader know the reasons behind your decisions.

Worth quoting

"Give a dog a bad name, and he will live up to it." *Appalachian saying*

Just for fun

Teacher: Tell me why the law of gravity is useful.

Student: If I drop something, it's easier to get it off the floor than off the ceiling!



What do you think?

As children grow up, they face a hectic world where thinking "on your feet" is important. How can you prepare your middle grader for the challenge? Help boost his thinking power.

Developing stronger thinking skills can increase your child's performance—in school and in life.

Here are several ways to encourage critical thinking.



Express ideas. When your child shares an idea, don't be quick to dismiss it. Instead, ask for more information. *Example:* "That's an interesting idea. How would you make it work?" If the idea is impractical, your middle grader will probably figure that out. Showing curiosity about his suggestions will give him the confidence he needs to sharpen his thinking skills.

Consider sources. Help your middle grader learn to evaluate information. *Example:* While watching the news together, point out the sources used to obtain information (government officials, court documents, hearsay). Talk about whether they are considered believable. Evaluating sources helps your middle grader analyze what she hears and reads.

Relate events. Whenever possible, let your middle grader practice summarizing. *Example:* After a field trip, ask him to tell you everything he did on the trip, in order. Retelling a series of events helps your child learn to organize his thoughts and express them clearly. Also, summarizing is a

useful skill when he is writing book reports or answering essay questions. 👍

Testing SOS

After working hard to prepare for tests, middle graders may need some test-day coaching to keep their cool. Share these tips with your child for better test results.

● **Limit review.** On the day of the test, don't look at your textbook. Scan a study outline or your notes, and then try to relax.

● **Pace yourself.** Wear a watch or glance at the classroom clock periodically so you know how much time is remaining.

● **Don't rush.** Don't worry if other students finish before you—a test is not a race. Use the entire period of time to do your best. 👍



Parenting pointers

For middle graders, life is full of stop signs. “Don’t stay up past your bedtime.” “No Internet before homework.” Rules are important, but too many no’s can be frustrating for kids and parents.

Try these suggestions for smoother parenting and better behavior.

Give choices

Giving kids a choice often achieves the desired result without an argument. *Example:* Try, “Go put on your black pants or your new jeans,” instead of, “You’re not wearing that to the movies!” Offering choices rather



than resorting to demands gives your middle grader a chance to correct his behavior on his own.

Offer praise

Have you ever received a surprise bonus at work? That’s how good a compliment feels to middle graders. Instead of always just saying no, find reasons to praise your child. *Example:* If she practices the piano every day, let her know you admire her dedication. A little praise—along with plenty of love and hugs—can inspire your middle grader to try harder to please you. 👍



Train for the future

Kids in middle school often think of a career as something for the future. But there are many neighborhood chores that your children can do now to give them some extra spending money *and* job experience. The skills your middle graders learn by doing a good job, handling money, and managing their time will benefit them in many careers.



Here are several jobs your children may want to consider:

- housecleaning, like dusting, vacuuming, and washing windows
- taking care of pets
- tutoring other kids
- washing and detailing cars
- yard work, such as mowing, weeding, and watering the garden

Note: For safety reasons, you should always meet the people your middle graders work for and make routine visits. 👍

O U R P U R P O S E

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Q & A Surviving puberty

Q My once-confident middle grader has become less outgoing now that puberty has set in. How can I help him deal with the changes he’s experiencing?

A You could start by telling him he has something in common with every other human in the world. It’s natural to feel awkward as his body changes. Truth is, most people feel “weird” during puberty. The physical changes he’s seeing now are an important part of growing up. Remind him that puberty often also brings on a roller coaster of emotions.

If your middle grader is open to it, share some “awkward” stories from your childhood. Knowing how you dealt with these feelings may make it easier for him to cope. 👍



Parent to Parent “It’s my room!”

“What are you doing!” my daughter Jenna exclaimed one afternoon when she discovered me in her room.

“I’m looking for the shirt you borrowed,” I explained. She said she’d already put it in the laundry. Then she firmly told me to leave her room.

Sure enough, I found my shirt in the laundry pile. But regaining Jenna’s trust took more work. I apologized for going in her room when she

wasn’t home. I hadn’t noticed how quickly my little girl was becoming an independent young woman who needs some privacy.

These days, I try to avoid being in Jenna’s room when she isn’t around. And if I need to speak to her when her door is shut, I knock and wait for a reply before entering. I’ve realized that it’s important for my daughter to have a space she considers her own. 👍

