

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Better reading

Does your child move his lips when he reads? Forming the words with his mouth slows down reading. Share this idea. Have him place a finger against his lips to keep them from moving. He'll start reading faster in no time.

News chat

It's not unusual for children to feel depressed or angry after watching the news. Stories of violence, natural disasters, and scandals can be disturbing. Talk to your middle grader about what she sees, and put limits on her exposure to news broadcasts.

Stay cool

Next time you and your middle grader disagree, try this idea. Stay calm—you'll have a better chance of getting your point across and avoiding more anger if you keep your cool. And remind yourself that conflict is normal.

Worth quoting

"Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Just for fun

Child: Dad, can you write in the dark?

Dad: I think so. What do you want me to write?

Child: Your signature on my report card.



Homework hints

You've helped your middle grader set up a quiet corner with supplies to do her homework. But when she opens her textbooks, she doesn't seem to know how to begin. What's the problem?

Homework doesn't have to be overwhelming. Try these tips to jumpstart your child's efforts.

Divide and conquer

When your middle grader complains that she has too much homework, suggest that she think of it in sections.

Example: math first, then science, then English. This will help her separate assignments into tasks she can handle. With every section your child completes, she'll have a sense of accomplishment, making the next task easier.

Outline breaks

Everyone needs a breather. But often a simple break for middle graders becomes an hour of doodling or snacking. Then it's hard for them to remember what they were working on. Before your child takes a break, have him write down his next study step ("answer



questions at the end of the chapter"). This reminder will help him pick up where he left off.

Consider group study

Some middle graders work better in groups. Studying with classmates gives kids the opportunity to quiz each other and share knowledge. To be successful, the groups should be small (two to six students). *Hint:* Since study groups can also foster friendships, remind your child that the focus should remain on homework. 👍

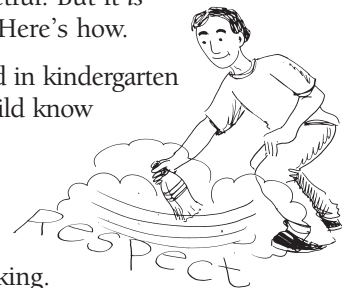
Respect reminders

It often seems that middle graders are disrespectful. But it is possible to encourage respect at this difficult age. Here's how.

Insist on manners. The manners children learned in kindergarten are often discarded by the middle years. Let your child know you expect him to use "please" and "thank you."

Discourage interruptions. Explain that it's rude to disrupt a conversation. If you are speaking to someone and your child interrupts, tell her you'll listen to her when you have finished talking.

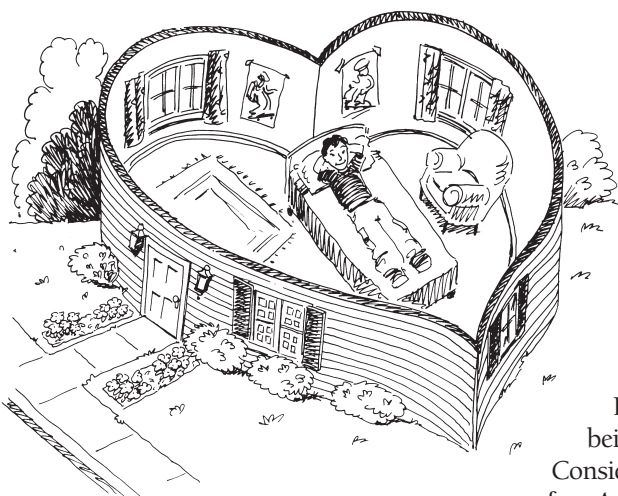
Stress kindness. Teach your middle grader the importance of considering others' feelings. For example, putting himself in another person's place can show him how hurtful name-calling can be. 👍



Practical independence

Does your middle grader want to do things *his* way? That's a sign of budding independence, a trait all parents want their kids to develop. But middle graders are sometimes confused about what it means to be independent: It's not about doing whatever they want to do; it's about doing what should be done without constant reminders.

Follow these suggestions to chart a smooth voyage to independence.



Be clear

There are certain issues that middle graders aren't ready to decide for themselves. Parents should set clear guidelines on things like personal behavior and safety (no swearing, no friends visiting without a parent at home). Giving your child boundaries makes him feel secure and will help pave the way to more responsible behavior.

Be appreciative

Be willing to reward your child with extra privileges when she shows maturity. Does she help around the house without being asked? Finish a project ahead of deadline? Consider offering her a later bedtime or an extended curfew. Acknowledging a job well done can encourage a more mature independence in your middle grader. 👍

Activity

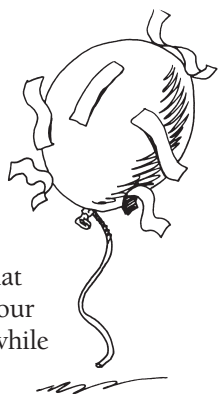
Static science

Here's an activity that will raise the hair on your middle grader's head while "sparking" curiosity about static electricity.

You'll need a balloon and bits of shredded newspaper, aluminum foil, and wax paper.

Have your child rub the inflated balloon on his head. Point out how static electricity makes his hair rise. Next, place the bits of paper on a table, and hold the balloon above them. What happens? Electrons deposited from his hair onto the balloon attract the paper.

Ask your middle grader to predict if other materials release electrons the way human hair does. Then, repeat the experiment using items such as a wool sock, sweater, and rubber ball. 👍

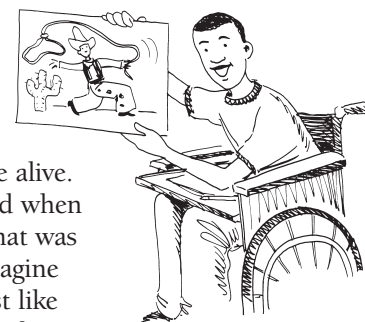


Parent to Parent Help with history

Last year my son struggled with history. Harping on his grades wasn't working, so I met with his teacher. When I mentioned that Jamie loves to listen to his grandfather tell stories about growing up on a ranch, she suggested several ways to make history come alive.

I started by digging out a photograph of his granddad when he was young and asking Jamie to guess his age and what was happening in the picture. Then, I challenged him to imagine historical figures as people who loved to tell stories, just like Granddad. Finally, I encouraged Jamie to sketch a scene from each chapter of his history book to help him visualize what he learned.

For his next project, Jamie focused on the early years of Theodore Roosevelt's life. He got a B. And his teacher says he asks questions in class now. My son, the history scholar! 👍



Q & A Bullying tips

Q *In a recent parent-teacher conference, I was told my daughter had been bullying other students. What can I do?*

A Keep in mind that kids bully for various reasons. Some think it makes them cool. Others have been picked on themselves. Children who are allowed to bully will often grow into violent adults.

First, get as many details from the teacher as possible about your middle grader's behavior. This information will help when you confront her.

Next, talk openly with your child about her behavior. Send the message that bullying is unacceptable for any reason.

Finally, keep closer tabs on your daughter. Ask about her day. Stay in routine contact with her teachers. And consider a "surprise" visit to her school.

Note: Spend extra time together. This strengthens your relationship and reminds your child that she doesn't need to act out to win your attention. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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