

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

Writing pals

Suggest that your middle grader become pen pals with a favorite relative, such as an aunt, a grandfather, or a cousin. She can write about her special interests and find out what her pen pal likes. She'll practice writing, organizing ideas, and putting thoughts into words.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a 2003 survey, more than 18 percent of high school students smoked their first cigarette before age 13. Talk to your child and send the clear message that smoking is unhealthy and unacceptable.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, www.cdc.gov/yrbss

Address the problem

You may be tempted to say, "You're such a slob!" when you see your middle grader's messy bedroom. But directing criticism at your child instead of the problem can hurt his feelings. Instead, focus on the unwanted behavior. *Example:* "Your room is a mess. Please clean it up."

Worth quoting

"The best way to cheer yourself up is to try to cheer somebody else up."
Mark Twain

Just for fun

Q: What do you get if you cross a computer with an elephant?

A: Lots of memory!



Stick to it!

Brianna started mowing the grass first thing Saturday morning, but she took a break and never returned to finish the lawn. Carlos spent an afternoon working on his science project—but gave up when it was only half-completed.

With a little help, your middle grader can learn to finish what she starts. Here are some ways parents have encouraged their children to practice perseverance.

State the purpose

"My son begins school each year with big expectations. He used to get discouraged once the work started piling up. Now I help him write down his goals before school starts, and he puts the list on his bulletin board. When he feels like giving up, rereading those goals encourages him to keep trying."

Give simple reminders

"This spring, my children decided to save some money for our summer trip



to the ocean. Whenever they wanted to spend their money at the mall, I simply said, 'Beach,' instead of lecturing and nagging. These small nudges helped keep them focused on their plan."

Cheer them on

"My daughter wanted to paint her room, but she got bored after the first coat. I playfully threatened to camp out in her room until she picked up the roller again. 'You can't quit now. Look how much we've done,' I told her. She smiled and started painting. The positive motivation from me was all she needed." 👍

Reading time

Today's busy schedules can make it difficult for middle graders to find time for reading. But reading is fundamental to success—in school and in life. To promote reading, encourage your child to:

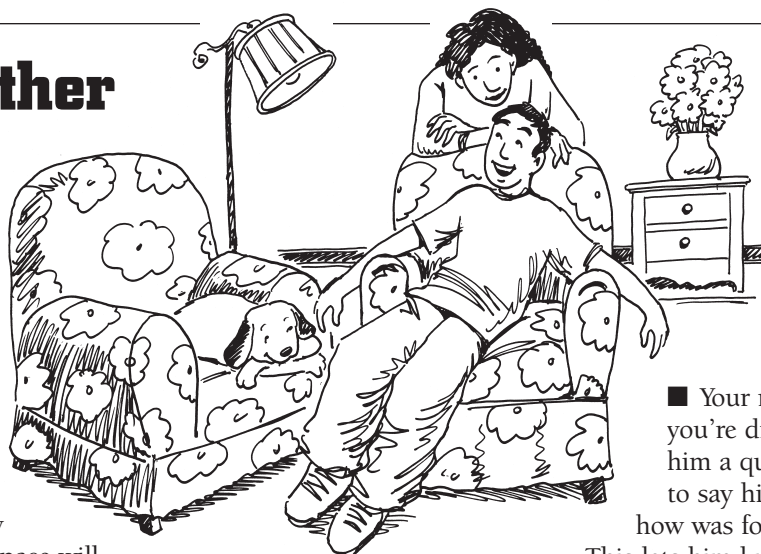
- Make regular visits to the library. He can browse books, magazines, and newspapers.
- Read whatever she enjoys. Her favorite reads might include science fiction, mysteries, or comics.
- Get lost in a book. Reading allows your middle grader to experience amazing adventures.
- Become an expert. Your child will enjoy being "in the know" about topics that interest him. 👍



Talking together

Middle graders are complex creatures. Some days they're chatty and lighthearted, while other days they're pretty quiet. It can be a challenge for parents to figure out how to communicate with their kids. Consider these tips:

■ Most children need time to unwind when they get home from school. Save your questions about your child's day for later in the evening. A little space will give him time to switch gears from school to home, making him more likely to open up.



■ Middle graders have opinions on a variety of issues. Asking your child's opinion will help her feel included in family decisions and encourage her to want to talk.

■ Your middle grader knows when you're distracted. Before asking him a question, it's a good idea to say his name. Example: "John, how was football practice today?"

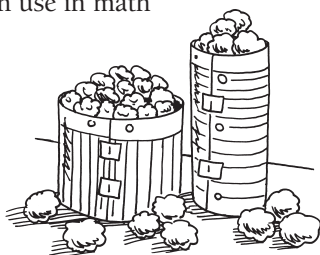
This lets him know you're truly paying attention. 👍



Activity Which holds more?

Here's an activity to help your kids learn to make visual estimates—a skill they can use in math and science.

Materials:
two sheets of notebook paper, tape, popped popcorn



Start by making two cylinders by rolling one sheet of notebook paper lengthwise and another sheet widthwise. Tape the edges together to form cylinders, and set them on a table side by side.

Ask your kids to guess which container holds more. Then, fill the taller cylinder with popcorn. Place the shorter cylinder around the tall one. Carefully lift the tall cylinder to let the popcorn fill the short one.

Which cylinder holds more? Did anyone guess correctly? 👍

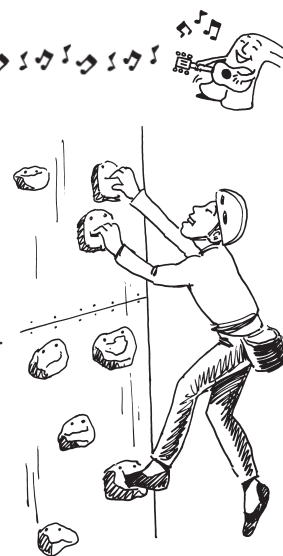
Q & A Healthy hobbies

Q My son is always complaining that he's bored and that "there's nothing to do." Any ideas?

A Suggest that your son start a hobby. Hobbies can keep kids physically and mentally fit while teaching valuable skills. For example, a child who enjoys fixing bikes will learn how a bicycle functions—while sharpening his thinking and problem-solving skills.

Hobbies can also build your child's confidence and improve his relationships with other middle graders. And after a hectic day at school, working on an enjoyable activity can relax his mind and body.

Cooking, building model cars, taking a rock-climbing class, creating a scrapbook—these are all good activities to fill your middle grader's free time. Have him pick one, and help him get started. Then, watch his boredom disappear. 👍



Parent to Parent Solving disagreements

My girls used to argue sometimes, as most siblings do. But when I caught them hitting each other one day, I had to step in.

The argument had started over a CD that they both wanted to play. Jenny said she had it first. Nan said the opposite. After insisting they calm down, I told them that disagreeing and getting angry are normal, but fighting isn't allowed.



I told the girls they were responsible for figuring out how to solve their disagreements without fighting—by flipping a coin to decide something or trading one item for another, for example. And, I said, if I caught them fighting over something, I'd take it away.

Now that the girls realize there are consequences when they fight, they try harder to work things out peacefully on their own. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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