

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### In the news

Sharing the news with your middle grader is a great way to spark discussions about everything from politics to the weather. Watch the news together on TV, or listen to broadcasts in the car. Many kids find news events interesting because they're happening "right now."

### Q&A tip

The middle years are a time of many questions for children *and* parents. As you browse the Internet, bookmark appropriate sites on topics like homework, making friends, and adolescent growing pains. Having easy access to several reliable sites can save both of you time when looking for answers.

### Preventing violence

If your child has abused pets or stray animals, share your concerns with the school's guidance counselor or your middle grader's physician. Some studies have linked animal abuse to cruelty toward humans.

### Worth quoting

"Things turn out best for the people who make the best of the way things turn out." *John Wooden*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Who succeeded the first president of the United States?

**A:** The second one!



## Listen and learn

Today, John's teacher returned a quiz, assigned homework, and gave a brief review for an upcoming test. But John was too busy passing notes and thinking about what he was going to do after school to hear any of it. Now he's facing a poor homework grade and a test he isn't prepared for.

Listening is a skill, just like reading and writing. Use these tips to help your middle grader improve school performance by learning how to listen.

### Watch the teacher

In elementary school, students are taught "Feet flat, back straight, eyes front"—and that's still good advice in middle school. Maintaining eye contact with the teacher helps your child focus on what he or she is saying. And sitting straight in the desk makes it easier for him to stay alert.

### Concentrate

What's the lesson about? Sure, it's history class, but is the teacher discussing the American Revolution or the Industrial Revolution? Asking herself questions such as "What do I know about this topic?" can help your middle grader concentrate and absorb information.

### Ignore distractions

Friends might try to chat, but make sure your child knows that schoolwork comes first.



He can talk with friends in the hall, at lunch, or after school. The lesson being taught is the only thing he should pay attention to during class. 👍

## Family togetherness

Want to have fun with your kids and bring your family closer together? Try these activities.

### ● Photo finish

Use family photographs to help your middle graders construct a history of their lives. Most children love to hear stories about themselves.

### ● Active fun

Host your children's next club meeting at your house, attend their sports games, or chaperone a field trip. Getting involved can be fun for you *and* your kids.

### ● Meet and greet

Invite your middle graders' friends to a family get-together. They'll love the chance to hang out, and you'll get to meet your youngsters' classmates. 👍



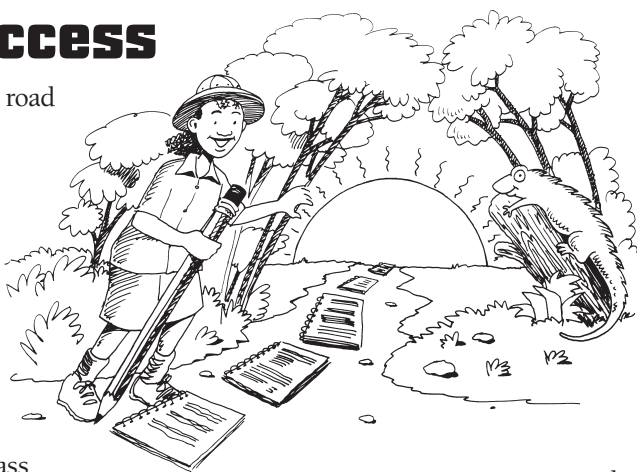
# Notes for success

Good class notes can serve as a road map to better learning. They make studying easier and more effective, which can improve grades.

Help your child write her road map to success with these hints.

## Before

Before the final bell for class rings, your middle grader should have her notebook open and a pen in hand. That way, she's ready to take notes when class begins. *Hint:* Suggest she leave a blank page at the beginning for summarizing the day's lesson.



## During

Have your child use an outline format to keep notes brief. Suggest he use abbreviations while taking notes, but remind him to be consistent. Also, encourage him to pay attention to the summary statements that teachers often make near the end of class.

They usually contain information that will appear on quizzes or tests.

## After

Have your middle grader edit her notes the first chance she gets, to be sure they make sense. She may want to highlight or underline key points. Studying will be easier with a little preparation. 🍊



# The joy of giving

The holidays are a time of giving. While receiving gifts is fun, giving them can be even more rewarding. Here are several ways to teach your child about the pleasures of giving.



■ **Try volunteering.** The gift of time is often the best present. Volunteer with your middle grader at a children's charity, soup kitchen, or community program.

■ **Give what you have.** Encourage your child to donate clothes and toys he no longer uses to charity organizations.

■ **Keep it simple.** Set spending limits on gifts to focus on spending time together, not money.

■ **Make gifts.** Have your middle grader write a poem, frame her artwork, or bake muffins for family members. 🍊

# Q & A Dealing with denial

**Q** My son never accepts responsibility when he does something wrong. He always says, "It wasn't my fault!" What can I do?

**A** Children are often quick to blame someone else when they do something wrong. Taking credit for mistakes—and successes—is part of growing up.

The next time this occurs, try sticking to the facts ("Sean, the milk was sitting on the counter all night"). He might protest, but don't get drawn into an argument. Lecturing him will only bring a louder response. Instead, calmly restate the facts and explain what should have been done. Without a strong reaction from you, your son may stop trying to deny what really happened.

*Reminder:* It's important to pick your battles. Something minor, like leaving the cap off the toothpaste, is probably not worth a confrontation. 🍊



# Parent to Parent Middle years rules

As our daughters reached middle school, we realized the family rules we had in the past weren't working any longer. The girls were watching too much TV, breaking curfew, and speaking rudely to us. To get a handle on their behavior, my husband and I came up with new rules for our family.

All the rules begin with "we," so it's clear that they apply to everyone. Also, we

explain our reasoning behind each rule. For example, one rule is that the girls must call us if they're running late, so we don't worry about their safety. Explanations make more sense to the kids than saying, "Do it because I said so."

Most important, we review our rules on a regular basis to be sure they still apply. And we let our kids have a say—if they think a rule is unfair, we decide on it as a family. 🍊



**O U R P U R P O S E**

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

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