

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



School is cool

How can you support your middle grader's teachers? By showing your child that "school is cool." Volunteer to help out in class, and attend school functions whenever possible. When parents get involved at school, their children's attitudes and grades improve.

Limits that work

Together with your children, choose the most important house rules (no hitting, obeying curfews). Then, list them on paper, along with consequences if they're broken. *Hint:* Be realistic. Don't threaten "no TV for a week" unless you can enforce it.

DID YOU KNOW?

When asked, most middle graders name their parents—before movie stars or athletes—as their role models. That means your kids are listening, even when they seem to ignore you. So, make time to talk with your children. What you say really does matter.

Worth quoting

"Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere."
Chinese proverb

Just for fun



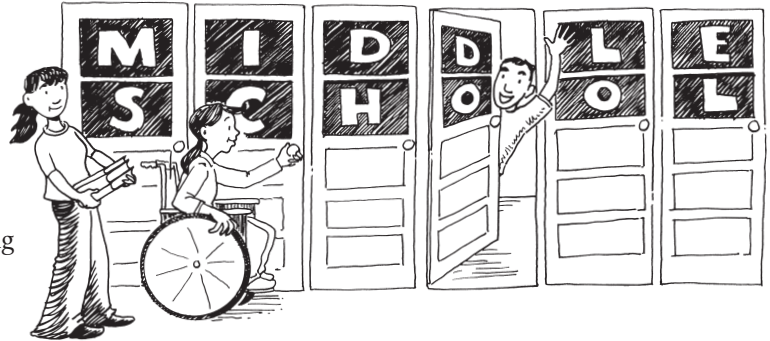
Jill: "I got in trouble at school today for something I didn't do."

Thomas: "What was that?"

Jill: "My homework."

Life in the middle

Middle school introduces kids to a new world. A variety of teachers, different friends, and tough choices bring challenges—both exciting and scary.



Try these tips to help your child jump-start the school year, whether he's a new or returning middle grader.

What to do

In middle school, your child will discover more friends, more activities, and more homework. That's why it's important to help your middle grader set priorities. For example, suggest that she plan time for daily studying before signing up for extracurriculars like drama, soccer, or choir. Focusing on priorities will keep your child from becoming overwhelmed.

What to expect

Students move from a single classroom to several rooms with different

teachers in most middle schools. When the bell rings, the hallways are flooded with kids trying to make it to the next class. What's the trick to navigating the chaos? Have your child plan his route between classes, including locker and bathroom stops, so he'll arrive on time.

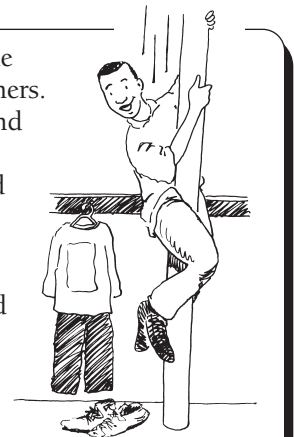
What to say

Maturing middle graders face mature challenges, such as smoking and drugs. Sharing your family values on these tough issues can help your child resist bad influences and say no. Let her know that she should tell you if someone offers her drugs. 👍

Morning mania

Do mornings have your middle grader in a panic? Some children seem to handle the morning rush better than others. If it seems like all you hear is "Where's my backpack?" and "Have you seen my book report?" it may be time for a change. Encourage your child to practice these habits and simplify his "commute" from the bed to the bus:

- Finish homework each evening.
- Fill backpack with school supplies before bedtime, and place it near the door.
- Shower and choose school clothes at night.
- Be in bed by 10 p.m. to get enough sleep. 👍



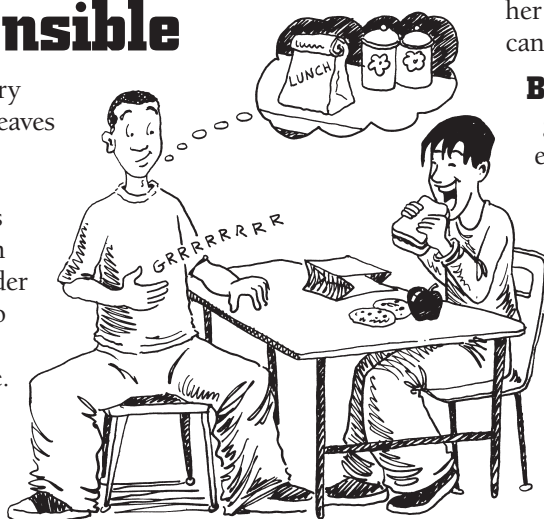
Being responsible

Alice doesn't return her library books when they're due. Tony leaves his lunch at home.

Sound familiar? Kids are not always as responsible as parents would like them to be. How can you encourage your middle grader to be more responsible—and to realize her actions have consequences? Consider this example.

Give clear expectations.

For instance, let your child know early in the week that



her Saturday chores must be finished before she can go to the football game that afternoon.

Be positive and encouraging. Try, "The game starts at 2:00. Why don't you get an early start on your chores so you'll be sure to make it on time?"

Don't rescue. If your middle grader sleeps in late and doesn't get her chores done in time to go to the game, don't jump in and do them for her.

Make gentle suggestions. "There's another game next weekend, so don't forget to set your alarm on Friday night." "If you get your chores finished, I'll drive you and your friends to the game." 👍



Q & A

A love of learning

Q My daughter gets average grades, but she constantly complains about school-work. How can I show her that learning can be fun?



A Start by casually asking her what she's studying or working on. If she shows you a project, find something good to say about it. Ask if you can display it on the fridge or bulletin board after it's graded. Don't offer advice or criticism unless she asks for it, and don't mention her grades. You may discourage her from sharing her work in the future.

Perhaps the most important thing you can do is to let your daughter see you learning. Do you discuss news topics over dinner, write letters, or go to the library? Are you taking a class in the evenings? These things demonstrate a love of learning in your own life that just might rub off on your daughter. 👍

Parent to Parent Personal safety

Recently, a man approached my son Alvin outside a convenience store and started cursing at him. Alvin didn't know the man or understand why he was angry. Luckily, the store's owner heard what was going on and told the man to leave.

That night, Alvin talked to his dad and me about what happened. We agreed that Alvin could have tried ignoring the man, but that might not have solved the problem.

Together, we came up with some safety guidelines to help Alvin avoid dangerous situations. He promised to stick close to his friends so he won't be alone. When he and his friends go out on the weekend, they'll only go to public places with good lighting and lots of people. And if someone confronts Alvin again, he will find the nearest adult and ask for help. 👍



Ready to write

"Oh, no! Not another essay!" Many middle graders feel overwhelmed at the thought of writing essays or reports.

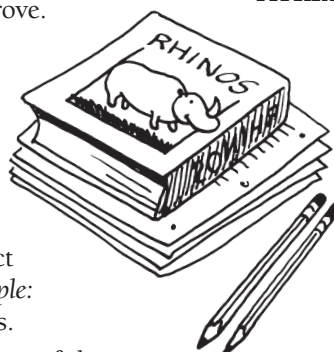
Fortunately, writing is a skill that anyone can improve.

Share these steps for better essays with your child.

Researching

▼ Read books, magazines, and Web sites about the subject you've chosen. *Example:* endangered mammals.

▼ Pick a specific aspect of the topic to write about, such as "rhinos."



▼ Jot down important facts (descriptions, history) and events (dates, people involved) as you read.

Writing

▼ State the topic in the opening paragraph. *Example:* "The black rhinoceros has been hunted to near extinction."

▼ Include details about the topic in each paragraph.

Editing

▼ Read the essay aloud to be sure it makes sense.

▼ Check spelling and grammar.

▼ Make revisions. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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