

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Daily challenge

Encourage dinner conversation by posting a daily question on your refrigerator. *Examples:* How would you solve the traffic problem in our city? Should there be a bike trail in the park? A daily question can get family members talking to each other and strengthen family bonds.

### Gifts from the heart

If your child has several friends she'd like to get gifts for, here's a thoughtful idea. Have her choose a photo of a group of pals and make a copy for each person. She can buy plain wooden frames from a craft or dollar store and decorate them with paint and beads.

### Locker makeover

Being organized is essential when your youngster is juggling many classes. Encourage him to empty his locker by bringing home folders and textbooks during winter break. He can file or throw away items he doesn't need and re-cover his books so he'll have a fresh start in the new year.

### Worth quoting

"The most wasted of all days is one without laughter."  
*e. e. cummings*

### Just for fun

**First cow:** Moo.

**Second cow:** Baa.

**First cow:** Why did you say baa?

**Second cow:** I'm learning a foreign language.



## Making sense of reading

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for tackling all kinds of school assignments. Plus, children are more likely to read for pleasure if they understand what they read.

Try these strategies to boost your middle grader's comprehension skills.

### Picture it

Suggest that your youngster form mental images as she reads. She can visualize adjectives used to describe a novel's characters (*tall, freckled*) or its setting (*crowded, quiet*). Or she might imagine a movie based on the book—even thinking of who she would cast in the roles. These pictures in her mind will help bring the story to life.

### Discuss it

Talk with your middle schooler about what she's reading. Ask her to predict what will happen next based on what has happened so far. Putting her thoughts into words can help her clarify the ideas presented in a book.

### Connect to it

Relating personally to what she reads will help your child comprehend it more deeply. She might write a diary entry from the main character's point of view to get an idea of what he's feeling and to understand his actions.

*Tip:* Suggest that your youngster search for a discussion guide



online. The questions posed will help her explore the characters and plot. To find guides, she can type a novel's name plus the words "reader's guide" into Google or another search engine. 👍

## Confidence boosters

Good self-esteem helps children make friends, handle challenges, and spread their wings. Give your youngster a dose of confidence with these ideas:

- Encourage your middle schooler to congratulate himself for what he did instead of focusing on what he didn't do. *Example:* "I made the school spelling bee," not, "I didn't make the state competition."
- Ask your youngster to pick an activity to do with you, such as biking or rollerblading. Doing what he enjoys shows you care about his interests. He'll get the message, "I'm important."
- Listen to your child's feelings. Even if his concerns seem small ("My haircut is too short"), responding to what he says shows that his feelings matter ("I know you don't like your hair, but it will grow out very quickly"). 👍



# Test-rific tips

The more prepared your child is, the easier his tests will be. Share these ideas for reviewing material.

■ **Gather information.** Before your middle grader can start studying, he needs to be sure he's not missing any information. If he was absent, he should borrow notes from a friend and ask teachers for missing handouts.

■ **Make a test.** Have your child turn main points from his notes or textbook into questions. *Example:* "What are three renewable energy sources?" He can use underlined notes,



headings, and end-of-chapter reviews to make up good questions.

■ **Create flash cards.** Give your middle schooler a stack of index cards. He can write vocabulary words or historical events on the fronts, and definitions or descriptions on the backs. Or he can make and print flash cards online (try [www.kitzkikz.com/flashcards](http://www.kitzkikz.com/flashcards)).

■ **Clear up confusion.** If your child finds a math equation or chemistry concept that he doesn't understand, have him set up time with his teacher before class, during lunch, or after school. Hearing something explained again, perhaps in a different way, can make the information click. 👍

# Safe from bullying

Up to half of children report being bullied at least once. Keep your child from being teased, threatened, or hurt with these strategies.

**Think "safety in numbers."** Being with at least one other person can discourage a bully from picking on your youngster. Encourage her to stick with friends in hallways, at lunch, in the restroom, and on the bus.

**Stay calm.** Fighting back gives a bully what she wants—a reaction. It can also land your child in trouble. Tell your youngster to speak firmly ("Stop—that's enough") and walk away.

**Tell an adult.** Let your child know that reporting a bully isn't "tattling." If she's bullied, she should alert an adult immediately. Take her seriously if she comes to you, and tell her you'll follow up in a way that makes her comfortable (calling her guidance counselor, for instance). 👍



# Q & A Online limits

**Q** I think my son would stay online all evening if I'd let him. How can I set limits?

**A** Consider creating a computer schedule so your child has a time slot each day. After he finishes schoolwork, he might get 30 minutes for online play (Web surfing, games). If he does homework on the computer, he should log off of instant messaging and social networking sites so friends don't interrupt him.

To help track your middle grader's usage and make sure he visits appropriate Web sites, keep the computer where you can see what he is doing. Also, look over his completed homework before his free time starts. Having limits will give him time for other activities like playing with friends, reading, and being with family. 👍



# Parent to Parent A savings lesson

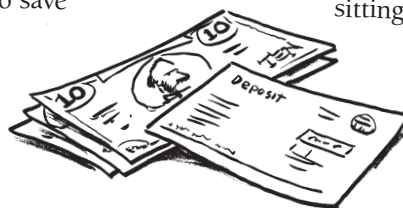
Once my daughter started babysitting, her money seemed to burn a hole in her pocket. She couldn't wait to spend it!

I wanted Alicia to learn to manage money wisely, so we opened a savings account in her name. We decided she would try to save at least half her cash from babysitting, her allowance, and gifts from relatives.

We also talked about what she might save for. She said she'd like to use her savings for special occasions, like concerts. I suggested that she might want to start putting money away for a car.

Now when Alicia earns babysitting money, I drive her to the bank as soon as I can.

Watching her account grow has helped her see the value in saving rather than spending every penny. 👍



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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