

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Motivated to read

Is your middle grader a reluctant reader? Try asking him to read to you while you prepare dinner. He could read newspapers, magazines, books on his favorite topic, comics, or whatever he chooses. He'll appreciate the personal attention—and improve his reading skills.

### DID YOU KNOW?

More than half of all serious juvenile crimes occur between 3 and 7 p.m. Help your kids stay out of trouble after school. Insist that they check in regularly—on the phone or in person—with you or another trusted adult.

### Money matters

Want your middle grader to learn to handle finances? Encourage her to create a budget for her allowance or odd-job money. She can keep track of her pay and expenses on paper. Every two weeks, have her subtract expenses from income. Then, discuss how she did.

### Worth quoting

"The rules for parents are but three... love, limit, and let them be." Elaine M. Ward

### Just for fun



**Q:** What's worse than finding a worm in your apple?

**A:** Finding half a worm!

## Off to a great start

### Prepared for learning

A new school year is a great time to establish new routines. The excitement can make the first few weeks hectic for the whole family. But with a little planning, your middle grader can start the school year off right. Try these tips to ensure that your child is ready and able to learn.

### Morning madness

Do mornings have your middle grader in a panic? Encourage her to prepare the night before with simple routines. For example, she can shower and choose her school clothes and have homework, gym uniform, and lunch money in one place. Also, be sure she gets to bed early enough to get a good night's sleep.

### Tools of the trade

Help your middle grader stay organized. Suggest that she set aside one pocket of her backpack for supplies (pens, pencils, calculator). She could also keep a shoebox of extra supplies in her locker.



### It's a date

Encourage your child to write down assignments in a small notebook. At home, she can transfer due dates for projects onto a monthly calendar. Together, add appointments, practices, and other important events to the calendar. That way, everyone will know at a glance what is going on each day. 👍

## Math teaser!

Sock it to your family with this math challenge. It only seems simple!

**Problem:** Mike has 10 white socks and 10 black socks in a drawer. He pulls out a black sock. Without looking, he pulls out another sock. What is the chance (or probability) that the second sock is also black? Is it 50 percent, more than 50 percent, or less than 50 percent? (Most people will say 50 percent.)

**Solution:** Have your child think again. Before Mike pulls out the first sock, 10 of the 20 socks in the drawer—or 50 percent—are black. But when he pulls out the second one, there are only 9 black socks and 10 white ones. Since there are more white socks now, the chance of getting a black sock is less than 50 percent.

For more math puzzlers to try with your child, visit Brain Teasers, [www.eduplace.com/math/brain/index.html](http://www.eduplace.com/math/brain/index.html). 👍



## Q & A Expect respect

**Q** My middle grader can be such a smart aleck. Some of the things he says are so rude. What should I do?

**A** As middle graders mature, they frequently begin to assert themselves. When expressing their opinions, they may speak disrespectfully. Kids also like to imitate behavior they see—in every- one from friends to TV characters.

When your child is rude, let him know immediately that his behavior is unacceptable. Try to be calm but firm. *Example:* “You may not talk to me that

way.” If necessary, end the conversation until he speaks nicely.

Then, explain what will happen the next time he speaks rudely (lose phone privileges for a week, can’t see his friends on the weekend). If he does it again, be sure to follow through with the consequence.

Finally, keep in mind that learning respect takes time. Middle graders like to shock their parents by acting out. But if you treat your child fairly, chances are he will become more respectful as he matures. 👍



## The art of listening

When it comes to communicating with your middle grader, sometimes what you hear is more important than what you say.



When parents take the time to listen, kids get the message that what they have to say is important. In turn, this makes them more likely to listen to your thoughts on the subject.

If your child starts a conversation, try to make time for it right then. She’s more likely to open up when she picks the time and topic.

Also, resist the temptation to jump in or ask your child lots of questions. As soon as you begin to criticize or cross-examine, she’s likely to stop talking. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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## Parent involvement pays off!

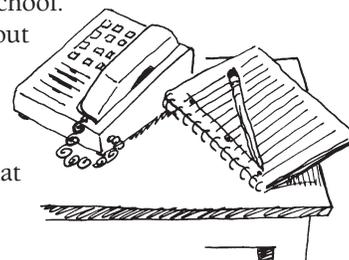
Children do better in school when parents are actively involved in their education. What can you do to support your middle grader? Consider these ideas.

**Make contact.** Touch base with your child’s teachers at the beginning of the year. You can write a note or attend open-house night. Share any information that might help the teacher know your child better. *Examples:* your middle grader’s interests, subjects she’s had trouble with in the past.

**Meet and greet.** Whenever possible, attend conferences and parent functions throughout the year. By meeting with teachers, you’ll learn firsthand how your child is doing, and you’ll have a chance to discuss strengths and weaknesses.

**Pitch in.** Show support for your middle grader’s school. Find out about volunteer opportunities—in and out of school. Working parents often make phone calls or help with fund-raisers.

*Good news:* By showing interest in your child’s education, you’re also showing interest in her. That kind of support can encourage your youngster to work harder in school. 👍



## Parent to Parent Homework hotline

Homework had our son Charlie groaning every night. It wasn’t too difficult, and he wasn’t behind. He simply dreaded doing homework.

So we suggested that he phone his brother, Andrew, at college for advice. Andrew recommended start-

ing with some exercise, such as five minutes of jogging, to kick-start Charlie’s mind. He also suggested setting time limits for assignments like math or science worksheets. “Racing against the clock is a good challenge,”



he said, “as long as you hand in quality work.”

Andrew’s final advice to Charlie: “Do homework at school to free up your evenings. Do it during homeroom or study period—but not during class.” We agreed with Andrew but made a rule that Charlie must bring his work home to show us that it’s done.

Charlie really appreciated his big brother’s advice. And I’ve noticed that he’s not complaining as much about his homework. 👍