

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### On time

Chatting in the hall between classes or making trips to an out-of-the-way locker can cause middle graders to be late for class. If your child is racking up tardy slips or dashing in as the teacher begins talking, suggest a change in his routine. He might visit his locker less often or save conversations for lunch and after school.

### Winter warm-ups

Chilly weather doesn't have to keep your family from staying fit. Walk around a zoo to see as many different animals as you can. Ask your child to look online or call the parks department for information about hiking trails. Or you might find a mall that opens its doors early for walkers.

### Choosing courses

Encourage your middle grader to think ahead to college when planning her schedule. Her guidance counselor can recommend math, science, and foreign language classes that will start her on a college-prep track. For her electives, she might explore interests that could lead to a college major or a career.

### Worth quoting

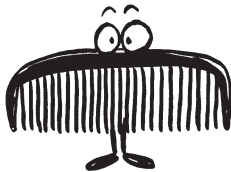
"The best inheritance a parent can give his children is a few minutes of his time each day."

*Orlando A. Battista*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has teeth but no mouth?

**A:** A comb.



## I remember that!

Caroline comes home from school upset. "I knew the answers—I just couldn't remember them when I was taking the test!" she tells her mom.

Sound familiar? If your youngster has trouble recalling facts at test time, you can help by sharing these memory-boosting tricks with her:

1. Make up acronyms. Your child can make each letter stand for something she needs to remember. *Example:* "ROY G. BIV" for the colors of the rainbow (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet).
2. Write information down. The act of putting things on paper will help your middle grader retain the facts.
3. Talk about it. Encourage your child to retell the story of a battle she's studying in history or the plot of a book she's reading for English. She can say it out loud to herself or tell it to you.
4. Use visuals. People tend to remember pictures better than words that are heard or read. Suggest that your middle grader draw sketches in her science notes for



elements in the periodic table or cut out pictures from magazines to match countries she's studying in geography.

5. Walk it through. Have your child "place" facts in different locations in your house. To remember the 13 original colonies, she might put Maryland in her sister Mary's room, Connecticut in Dad's office where the Internet connection is, and New York in the garage where she keeps her new bike. She can imagine herself in each spot as she recites all 13 colonies. 👍

## School helpers

Getting involved in your child's school shows that you care and will encourage him to do his best. Try these ideas for helping out.

### During school

- Staff a welcome desk. You might be asked to greet visitors, have them sign in, and give directions.
- Volunteer in the media center. The librarian may ask you to arrange displays or help students check out books.

### After school

- Advise an after-school club like yearbook or drama. *Tip:* Ask your child if he'd like you to help with an activity he's in or a different one.
- Work on fund-raising efforts, such as the school store or discount programs with local merchants. 👍



# Believing in me

Your middle grader is asked to become team captain or enter a poetry contest. Does he hesitate, or jump at the chance?

Confidence can make the difference between a youngster who tries new things and one who sits on the sidelines. Try these tips for raising a confident child.

**Highlight the positive.** Suggest that your middle schooler start a binder to track his achievements. He can include swim meet ribbons, a list of Scout badges, and nice comments from teachers. Leafing through them will remind him of past successes.



**Encourage pep talks.** Teach your child to notice negative thoughts (“I’m not ready for this quiz!”) and turn his thinking around (“I’ll do my best”). You can help by not labeling him. Instead of “You’re so picky,” say, “You might like zucchini if you tried it.”

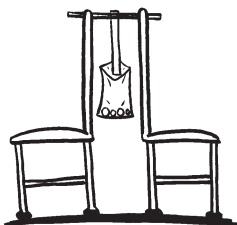
**Give sincere praise.** Congratulate your middle grader for his efforts. Try to be specific (“You spent a lot of time on your poem. I love the adjectives”), and avoid exaggerating (“You’re the best writer in school!”). 👍



## Get sticky!

Your child probably uses tape for homework, a school project, or something around the house. Suggest this science experiment so she can see which type of adhesive works best.

**Materials:** ruler, 2 chairs the same height, plastic bag, 3 or 4 kinds of tape (Scotch, masking, duct, packing), pennies



Put the chairs back to back, about 6 inches apart, and lay the ruler across the tops. Tape a 6-inch piece of tape to the ruler and to each side of an open plastic bag. Add a penny at a time until the bag falls. How many pennies did it hold? Repeat the experiment with each kind of tape.

**Variation:** Freeze the tapes, and repeat the experiment. Heat each one with a hair dryer, and try again. How does temperature affect stickiness? 👍

## Q & A Help siblings get along

**Q** My daughters argue over everything. How can I help them get along better?

**A** Sibling fights can certainly try parents’ patience! Try to use them as a lesson in problem solving, and your children will learn important skills like negotiating and compromising.

First, discuss rules for situations that start fights. If they quarrel over computer time, set a schedule together. Maybe one child gets it from 4 to 4:30 and her sister uses it from 4:30 to 5.

Also, talk about ways to handle arguments. Your kids should calm down before discussing a problem. Then, they should listen to each other’s side of the story—without interrupting. Finally, they can compromise. For instance, if they share a room and can’t agree on what color to paint the walls, they could each choose a color for half the room.

**Tip:** Encourage your children to have fun together. Sharing good times like skating or movies makes it easier to get along. 👍



## Parent to Parent Handling report cards

When our son Aidan brought home his report card, we were disappointed to see that his English and math grades had dropped. My husband and I were careful to praise his good grades first, but then we asked him what had happened.

When he complained that the classes were too hard, we looked through his graded assignments to see where he needed help. It turned out that many of his errors were careless ones, like misspelled words and sloppy arithmetic.

He said that with so much to do in school, he had stopped checking his work.

So we brainstormed ways to fix the problem. Aidan came up with the idea of splitting his study time into two sessions—before and after dinner. We suggested that he use the last

half hour to proofread his work. I think having a plan has helped all of us feel better about the second half of the school year. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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