

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



History helper

Show your child that history is more than names and dates. Encourage her to browse library books and Web sites for pictures, paintings, and drawings of the people and places she's learning about in school. Connecting images with facts can make "ancient history" come alive.

Shoplifting is serious

Some middle graders admit they've shoplifted out of boredom. Others do it just to see if they can get away with it. Be sure your child knows that shoplifting is a very serious crime. If he shoplifts, insist that he return the item and face the consequences.

"You've got talent, kid!"

Does your youngster have a talent she'd like to share? Steer her to www.talentedkids.com. With your consent (and supervision), your middle grader can e-mail a story highlighting her skill. She'll improve her writing skills and build her self-confidence.

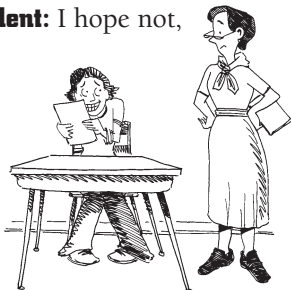
Worth quoting

"Motivation is what gets you started. Habit is what keeps you going."
Jim Ryun

Just for fun

Teacher: I hope I didn't just see you trying to look at Susan's paper!

Student: I hope not, too!



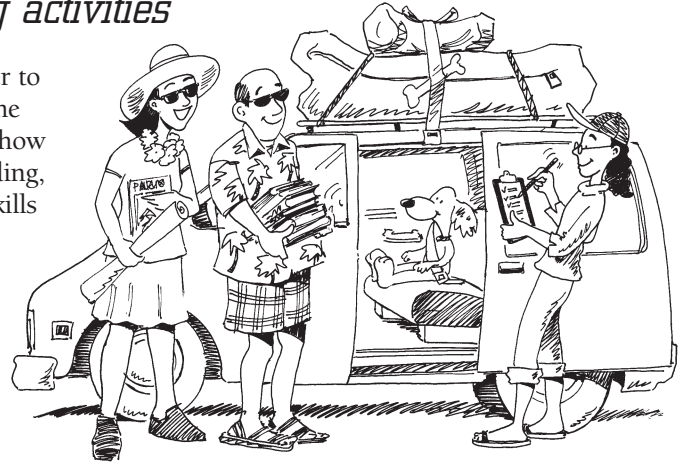
Practice makes perfect

Summer learning activities

Want your middle grader to have a successful start to the next school year? Studies show that kids who practice reading, writing, math, and other skills over the summer have an easier time returning to school in the fall.

Help your child avoid the "summer learning slide" with these ideas:

- Encourage your middle grader to read during the summer by striking a bargain. For every book she finishes, she can watch the movie version. Many terrific, age-appropriate books have been made into movies that are available at video stores or community libraries.
- Watching nature is a great outdoor activity for keeping your child's research and observation skills sharp. Suggest she identify the different trees in her neighborhood or community park using a library



reference book. Or have her set up a backyard birdbath and name the kinds of birds that visit.

- A family trip, whether it's for a week or a day, can teach your middle grader a great deal. That's because traveling involves geography (maps), math (distances, gas mileage), reading (travel guides, signs, menus), and science (climate, landscape). Let your child help plan the trip. She could research where to go and what to do when you get there. 👍

Middle money management

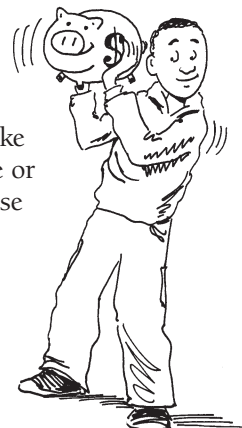
Handling money is like most things in life: The more experiences your middle grader has, the more likely he will do it successfully. Consider giving your child money-management opportunities like these.

Take control

When kids have money they can control, they learn to make smart money decisions. Giving your child a weekly allowance or payment for extra chores allows him the opportunity to choose whether to spend or save.

Keep track

Encourage your middle grader to keep track of the money he gets, spends, and saves. A written record is a useful way for him to see how well he is—or isn't—managing his money. 👍



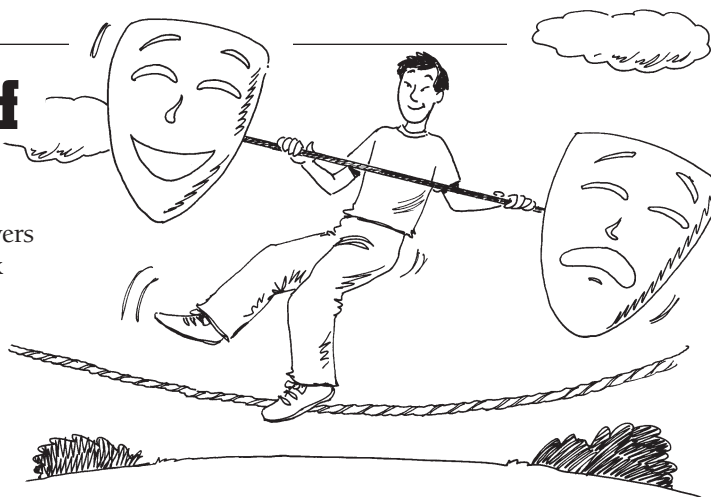
Ups and downs of the middle years

You ask your child to put away the leftovers after dinner. When he reaches for a zip-lock bag, you suggest a plastic dish instead. "I can't do anything right!" he fumes.

Moodiness is a normal part of growing up for middle graders. Try these ways to make the best of your child's mood swings.

Stay involved

Knowing what's going on in your middle grader's life can give you clues about his behavior. Is he late finishing a project? Did he have band tryouts? From time to time, knock on his door just to chat.



Stay open

Remind your child that he can come to you if something's bothering him. A simple statement will let him know he can rely on you. *Example:* "I'll listen whenever you want to talk."

Stay steady

Moodiness is no excuse for disrespectful behavior. Explain to your middle grader that outbursts—from kids and parents—upset the entire family. Encourage everyone to keep their voices quiet and their comments fair. 👍



Friend or foe?

Even the best of friends disagree at times. Give your middle grader the following ideas for settling disagreements:

- If dealing with conflict face-to-face makes your child uncomfortable, suggest a phone call or short note to her friend to break the ice. A day or two to cool off might be helpful, but letting the situation go unresolved can increase tension.



- Encourage your middle grader to speak slowly and calmly when she talks with her friend. Name-calling or sarcastic remarks will only make things worse.
- Your child and her friend could take turns suggesting ways to resolve the argument. Can they find a compromise? If they both give a little, they'll be less apt to feel resentful—and free to move on with their friendship. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Q & A Reading for understanding

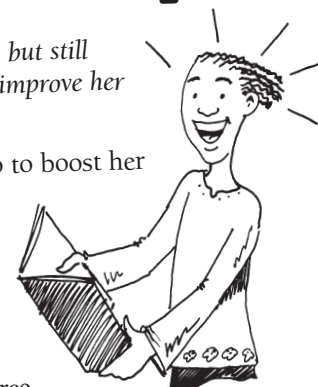
Q My child spends a lot of time on reading assignments but still seems unclear about what she reads. How can I help her improve her understanding?

A There are several things your middle grader can do to boost her reading comprehension. Suggest that she ask herself questions as she reads. *Examples:* "What is the author talking about?" "What do I already know about this subject?" Finding the answers can help her stay focused on what she's reading.

Also, re-reading the first and last sentences of each paragraph before moving on to the next one will reinforce the main points in the text.

Finally, try to get your child to talk about what she reads. Discussing ideas can increase her interest which, in turn, will boost her understanding.

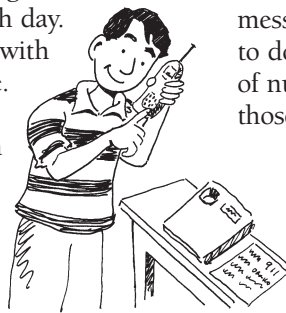
Note: If your middle grader's problems continue, talk with her teachers. 👍



Parent to Parent Safe at home

I work full-time, so I'm not around when my son Stephen gets home from school each day. Together, we came up with an after-school routine.

Stephen knows to always call me as soon as he gets home. We've drawn up a list of dos and don'ts: do make a snack, but don't use the stove; do answer



the phone, but don't tell anyone I'm not home (he says I'm busy and takes a message). We routinely talk about what to do in an emergency. And I keep a list of numbers next to the phone, including those of several trusted adults.

So far, things have gone pretty smoothly. But Stephen knows that if he ever feels uncomfortable, I'll arrange for him to stay with our neighbor or a classmate's parents until I get home. 👍