

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



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California Middle School
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Help your child manage the demands of end-of-year work

The end of the school year is a busy time filled with final projects, tests and other assessments—in addition to regular classwork. Managing everything successfully requires students to set priorities and get organized.

Share these tips to help your child handle his end-of-year workload:

- **Put homework first.** Whether your child prefers to do homework as soon as he gets home from school or wait until after dinner, completing assignments and handing them in on time should be his top priority.
- **Keep track of key dates.** Few students can remember all of their deadlines and test dates without writing them down. Your child should write everything on a calendar, and use it to make daily to-do lists.
- **Don't forget reminders.** Writing "bring history book home tonight" on a sticky note and attaching it to the front of his binder can help your child remember to pack the book in his backpack at the end of the day.
- **Minimize distractions.** If your child is feeling under pressure at the end of the year, texts from friends or background noise from the TV can sidetrack him completely and waste valuable time. Make sure that your middle schooler studies in a quiet place, and have him turn off all devices that he doesn't need for schoolwork.



Make writing a pleasure

During the school year, students must write on assigned topics. With summer comes the freedom to write about whatever they love. Suggest that your child write about his favorite:

- **TV show or movie.**
- **Way to be creative.**
- **Thing about himself.**



Change behavior positively

You and your child may have more time to spend together when school is out. Using positive discipline will help ensure that you both have a peaceful, productive summer. Here are some tips:

- **Be pleasant to your child** even when she is not pleasant herself.
- **Compliment her** when she does something right.
- **Give her the benefit** of the doubt. If she is usually trustworthy, believe her.
- **Use positive words.** If your child wants to go to a friend's house, don't say "Not until your room is clean." Instead, say "Sure, as soon as your room is clean."

Keep reading skills sharp

When it comes to reading ability, the old saying "Use it or lose it" applies. Students who don't read over the summer break lose reading skills. To encourage your middle schooler to keep reading all summer:

- **Show your enthusiasm** for reading. Let your child see you leafing through magazines or reading a novel instead of watching TV.
- **Share.** Did you just read an intriguing article on social media? Tell him about it and pass it on.
- **Respect** that your child's interests may be changing. Help him find books that reflect his new ones.



Volunteering makes a difference

Community service helps adolescents understand the needs and feelings of others and recognize their own power to improve the world. It also lets kids experience new things, develop new interests and learn new skills.

Help your middle schooler explore ways to get involved in your community this summer. She could volunteer to:

- **Read to preschoolers** or senior citizens.
- **Collect items** to include in care packages for deployed military personnel and their families.
- **Be an assistant counselor** for a children's program.
- **Organize a drive** to clean up a local park or playground.
- **Mow a lawn** or help with chores for a new mom or elderly neighbor.
- **Collect books** to donate to shelters, daycare centers and schools.
- **Be an assistant coach** for a youth sports recreation league.

Source: S. Trapani, "Community Service Ideas for Middle Schoolers," PTO Today, niswc.com/services.



What can I do to help my child improve study skills?

Q: It's clear that my middle schooler's study skills need some work before next fall. But how can I help her improve them when school is almost over?

A: Beginning to tackle this now, while the problem areas are still fresh in your child's mind, can make it easier to solve them.

So don't wait! Ask your child what she thinks her strengths and weaknesses are. You may also want to ask her teachers to suggest ways you can help her with specific problems.

To strengthen your child's study skills now and over the summer:

- **Help her practice observing.** Are you taking a car or bus trip? Ask your child to look for specific signs or landmarks along the way. Ask her questions that require her to pay attention to details.
- **Encourage daily reading.** Does your daughter read for pleasure? Schedule regular trips to the library so she can choose reading materials to match her mood. Then make time to discuss what she's reading.
- **Have her put things in writing.** Is your child a computer whiz? Ask her to write a "Here's what to do if ... " manual. Has she seen a new movie? Have her write a review. Is she full of opinions or ideas? Encourage her to capture them in a journal.



Do you monitor your child's social life?

Social life takes on more importance in middle school. And this is especially true in summer, when kids often have more time with friends. Are you ready to keep track of your child this summer? Answer *yes* or *no* below:

- ___ **1. Do you know** your child's friends?
- ___ **2. Do you have** up-to-date contact information for the parents of your child's friends?
- ___ **3. Do you always ask** your child what he will be doing, where and with whom, and what time he will be home?
- ___ **4. Have you encouraged** your child to participate in organized summer activities like camps and volunteering?
- ___ **5. Do you research** movies and activities to make sure

they are appropriate before allowing your child to go?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are taking steps to ensure that your child's social life stays positive. For each no, try that idea from the quiz.

"True friendship multiplies the good in life and divides its evils."

—Baltasar Gracián

Contests can inspire effort

Whatever your child's interest—science, art, writing, cooking—there is probably a contest for it. Entering a contest allows your child to focus on her talents, and the competition may inspire her to produce a "personal best." Win or lose, she'll have taken a healthy risk. To find a suitable contest:

- **Check with the school.** Sponsors sometimes send materials and entry forms directly to schools.
- **Ask at the public library.** Librarians often know about contests for students.

Be sure to research any group offering a contest before you allow your child to enter.

Use the summer to connect

Relaxed summer evenings are perfect for strengthening the family bonds that support school success. You can:



- **Hold family meetings.** Involve your child in planning fun things to do.
- **Take your child on errands.** He may find it easier to talk in the car.
- **Participate in family traditions,** or create some new ones together.

Smooth a high school move

Will your child be starting high school in the fall? To ease her transition:

- 1. Plan a visit** while school is in session. There may be an open house for new students. If not, call and schedule a tour.
- 2. Encourage your child** to ask current students, "What do you wish you had known before starting high school?"
- 3. Reinforce skills.** Urge your child to review her notes and rework some past math homework problems this summer.
- 4. Reassure her.** Say, "You've got this!"

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