

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Now hear this

Active listening skills will make your middle grader an effective communicator throughout life. Model these skills by looking at him when he talks to you and repeating what he says to show that you understood him. And have conversations about topics he's interested in so he practices speaking and listening.

### Who I want to be

Encourage your child to think about the kind of person she wants to be by creating a poster to remind herself of those goals. Maybe she hopes to be helpful or to see things through. She could write her ideas using colored pencils or markers and decorate the poster. Then, suggest that she hang it where she can see it every day.

### Paper chase

Do papers in your home quickly turn into piles? Make clearing the clutter into a family project. Sort papers together, deciding what to save and what to recycle, shred, or throw away. You'll teach your tween how to stay organized—and feel a sense of accomplishment together.

### Worth quoting

"The beginning is always today."  
*Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What do pandas have that no other animal has?

**A:** Baby pandas!



## Reading: Dig deeper

Tweens are at a perfect age to connect in a deeper way with what they read. They're looking for situations and characters they can identify with, and they're able to understand more complicated ideas. Here are ways your middle grader can boost her reading comprehension skills.



### Connect with characters

As your child reads, suggest that she imagine which characters she'd want to be friends with. Encourage her to think of questions she would ask if she met them. For example, she may wonder about their favorite movies or books. Or she could ask, "What is your favorite room in the castle?"

### Play with point of view

Just as your youngster and a friend might see the same situation differently, so might the people in a book. She should consider who is telling the story. Say the daughter is the narrator of the story. How might the plot change if told through the eyes of the mother? How would the story

change if it was told in third person rather than first person?

### Go beyond the book

Have your tween use what she has read to come up with "before and after" stories that help her explore the book even more. Based on details in the text, she could write a prequel about what might have taken place in a character's life before the book started. Or she could write a sequel about what happens after the book ends. 👍

## Smart snacking strategies

When your child comes home from school, chances are he's hungry for a snack. Help him choose wisely using these tips.

**Fill the gap.** Suggest that your tween opt for proteins and high-fiber foods to give him energy until dinner. He could eat a turkey slice rolled into a slice of Swiss cheese and an orange, for example.

**Size it right.** Encourage your middle grader to read nutrition labels so he understands portion sizes (say, 10 pita chips or  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of cottage cheese). He might even pre-measure snacks and put individual servings in containers or baggies.

**Mix it up.** Eating a variety of healthy foods will end snack boredom. Perhaps he'll try hard-boiled eggs and guacamole, plain Greek yogurt with cut-up fruit and a drizzle of honey, or popcorn combined with almonds and raisins. 👍



# Learn to bounce back

Resilient youngsters deal well with problems and stressful situations by having the ability to overcome setbacks. Consider these ideas for developing resilience in your middle schooler.

## Be consistent

A safe, loving home with regular routines goes a long way toward building resilience. Try to stick to rituals like talking to your tween about his school day and eating dinner together. Being able to



count on these everyday events will make it easier for him to deal with bumps in the road, such as not getting invited to a party or chosen for the school play.

## Keep going

Thinking about next steps will help your middle grader move forward—and feel more in control of his destiny. If your family is coping with a divorce, for exam-

ple, suggest that he create a color-coded calendar showing which parent he is with each day. Also, share ways that you cope with challenges. You might tell him about a problem at work that you were able to turn around. Learning from your experiences shows him how people he respects overcome setbacks and succeed. 👍

# Location, location

How can your middle grader explore geography without ever leaving home? Suggest these activities.

■ **Build.** Your tween could use Legos to build the Eiffel Tower or mold clay into the ancient pyramids. Or she might create the Grand Canyon out of paper mache.

■ **Draw.** Have your youngster draw a picture of a place she would like to visit. She might sketch boot-shaped Italy and add the canals of Venice, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and the Coliseum in Rome.



■ **Celebrate.** Encourage your middle schooler to spearhead a family celebration of a holiday that's celebrated in a faraway land, such as China's Lantern Festival or Youth Day in Zambia.

■ **Play.** Over dinner, play "Geography." Your child begins by naming any city, state, or country. The next person has to say one starting with the last letter (Morocco, Oregon, New York City). Keep going until someone is stumped, and then start again. 👍

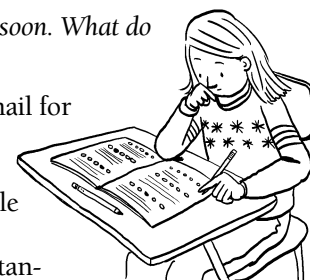


# Q & A The lowdown on standardized tests

**Q** My daughter will be taking standardized tests soon. What do I need to know?

**A** Watch your daughter's backpack or your email for information on when the tests will be given and what types she will take. Also look for notices about practice tests—these will make your youngster more comfortable with the real tests.

In middle school, your child may take one or more standardized tests each year. Her teacher will devote class time to test prep, so try to be sure your daughter doesn't miss any school days. To do well, students need to be in class and pay attention during reviews. Your child should also listen for any changes. For instance, the types of questions may be different from those in the past, and tests may no longer be timed. 👍



# Parent to Parent Run phone interference

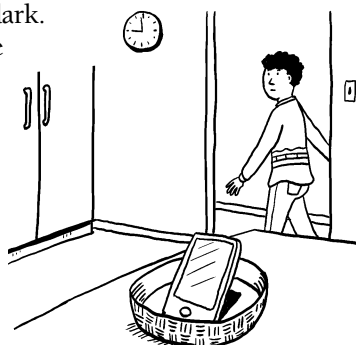
There were many nights when I passed my son Nathan's bedroom and saw his cell phone glowing in the dark. When I insisted that he shut off his phone, he would complain, "What if I miss something important?"

I realized that his phone was disrupting his sleep. We had a talk, and I set a couple of boundaries: no

phone after 9 p.m., and he had to leave it in the kitchen overnight. I suggested that he tell his friends he won't be using

his phone during these times so they'll know he isn't ignoring them.

Nathan wasn't thrilled with the changes, but I tried to help him see that any texts or updates would still be there later. And while he hasn't admitted it, I can see he's waking up more refreshed. 👍



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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