

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Get going with breakfast

Eating breakfast will help your tween start the day ready to learn. Together, come up with quick and nutritious breakfasts to make at home. Or encourage her to eat a healthy meal in the cafeteria with friends. *Note:* If she receives school lunch at a reduced price or for free, her breakfast will be reduced cost or free, too.

### Walk this way

Let your middle grader know it's important to keep his eyes on his surroundings as he walks. He'll avoid serious injury from falling, running into objects, or stepping into traffic. Explain that he shouldn't play electronic games, listen to music, or text while walking—including to and from the bus stop or school.

### Conserve resources

Ask your youngster to help your family be more environmentally friendly. Have her research ways you can conserve resources (switch to low-energy light bulbs, recycle more items, take reusable bags when you shop). Then, try to adopt one of her ideas each month.

### Worth quoting

"Every strike brings me closer to the next home run." *Babe Ruth*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why did the boy put honey under his pillow?

**A:** He wanted to have sweet dreams.



## Tween discipline that works

Your middle schooler wants more freedom. You want to keep him safe and set age-appropriate limits. How do you balance his need for independence with the need for rules and consequences? Try these strategies.

### Let's review

Go over the rules you have in place and get his input. He'll be happier to comply if he has a say in them. Perhaps he thinks he should be able to go to friends' houses on school nights, and you agree to that for one night a week. Explain your reasons, and be clear you have the final word. Also, lay out consequences so he knows what will happen if he breaks the rules.

### Expect to be tested

Tweens tend to push the limits to see how serious parents are and may argue to get out of consequences. Stay calm and on point ("Nevertheless, we agreed you wouldn't eat in your bedroom"). Stick to the consequence you set (having him wash his bedding to get rid of food



stains). He'll see he can't slide by and will be more likely to follow the rules in the future.

### Reflect on actions

The goal of discipline is to teach your child good judgment. He can learn a lot by reflecting on his actions. Say he breaks a rule, like heading to a social outing without finishing his homework first. Ask what he *thought* would happen. Maybe he didn't think you'd notice. What happened instead? He has to miss an event this weekend as a result. How could he avoid this situation next time? 👍

## Speak up!

Participating in class can help your tween get more value out of school and learn to express herself. Encourage her to contribute with these tips.

■ **Find your zone.** Suggest that she participate in ways she feels comfortable with and then expand her "toolbox." She might start off commenting on assigned readings she enjoyed. Eventually, she may speak up when she agrees with someone's viewpoint or to offer a different one.

■ **Mix it up.** Class-wide discussions aren't the only opportunity to participate. When your middle schooler works in smaller groups, she could ask and answer questions, make observations, or give opinions. These steps can build confidence for talking in front of the whole class. 👍



# Real-world reading

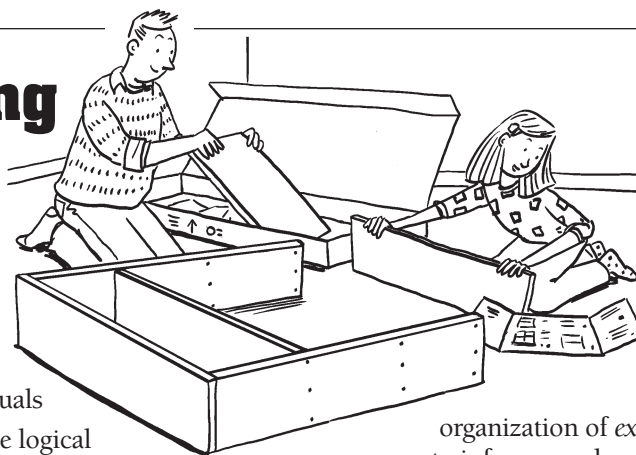
Nonfiction reading is a big part of everyday adult life—at work and home. To help your middle grader learn to pick out and analyze important information, encourage her to read more nonfiction texts now. Here are some easy ideas.

## Follow a process

**What:** Recipes, game directions, how-to manuals

**Why:** These texts teach youngsters to navigate logical sequences of steps and identify key details.

**How:** Let your tween read and share directions as family members cook or play a game. Or have her read instructions



as you put together a bookcase or figure out how to operate a new phone or microwave.

## Follow the facts

**What:** News articles, menus, travel guidebooks

**Why:** Your child will get familiar with the organization of *expository text*, which seeks to inform or educate readers.

**How:** Talk about news articles you read and what you learn, and inspire her to do the same. If you order carryout food, have her read menus and place the order. When you visit new places, ask her to scan guidebooks and share facts. She can play tour leader, suggesting sights and activities your family will enjoy. 👍

## Notable notes

Good notes can help your tween remember what was taught in class, create study guides, and review for tests. Share these steps for being an excellent note taker.

**1. Prepare beforehand.** Your child will have an easier time keeping up with the teacher if he has read the assigned handouts or chapters. Why? He'll be familiar with the material and vocabulary.

**2. Learn each teacher's style.** To emphasize crucial material, one teacher may use hand gestures, while another may write phrases on the board. Your middle grader should write that information down and star or circle it.

**3. Ask questions.** If your child doesn't understand something, he could jot a question mark in the margin of his notes. Then, he can ask about it when the teacher invites questions. Most likely someone else has the same question and will be glad he spoke up. 👍



## Q&A

### Learning to have grit

**Q** I've heard that kids need "grit" to be successful. What is it, and how can I teach it to my 12-year-old?

**A** Grit involves perseverance, courage, and resilience—basically sticking with tasks or goals until you see them through. Having passion will help your child to develop grit, enabling her to stay with something when the going gets tough and to overcome problems along the way.

You can foster grit in your middle grader by explaining it and pointing out examples, such as a coworker who learned to read as an adult. Or bring home library books about famous people who persevered. For instance, Dr. Seuss had his first book rejected by 27 publishers before it was accepted.

Setting up a family challenge can give everyone a chance to be "gritty." Have each person choose something they want to do that might be difficult but is possible. The key? No one is allowed to quit! 👍



## Parent to Parent

### Get to know new friends

When my son was in elementary school, I always knew his friends. Once he got to middle school, he started hanging out with classmates I'd never heard of.

It worried me to let Jake spend time with kids I didn't know. I asked him to invite them over, and meeting them in person helped put me at ease and gave me a

way to connect faces with names. I asked for their phone numbers and their parents' numbers as well. That way, I could contact them if they were with Jake and I couldn't reach him. Calling the parents to say hello opened the door in case we ever need to get in touch.

I'm still getting to know Jake's pals. But at least I'm feeling more relaxed about his new middle school social scene. 👍



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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