

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Spotlight on effort

When your middle grader brings home a graded test or assignment, first ask what he learned rather than what grade he got. You'll send the message that it's not just his grades that count—it's also the effort he puts into his education and what he gets out of it. Plus, his answer may lead to an interesting discussion.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Research shows that most tweens would like to talk more with their parents about schoolwork. Ask your child to share what she's learning in her classes. Be specific: "What kind of math problems did you do today?" or "Tell me about the science experiment you did in lab today."

### Waiting patiently

Does your youngster expect everything to happen *now*? If a friend doesn't call back immediately or his teacher hasn't graded his project yet, encourage him to come up with possible explanations. Maybe his friend is at a movie or the teacher has 100 assignments to grade. Thinking reasonably can help him be patient.

### Worth quoting

"The time is always right to do what is right." *Martin Luther King Jr.*

### Just for fun

**Q:** When does Friday come before Thursday?

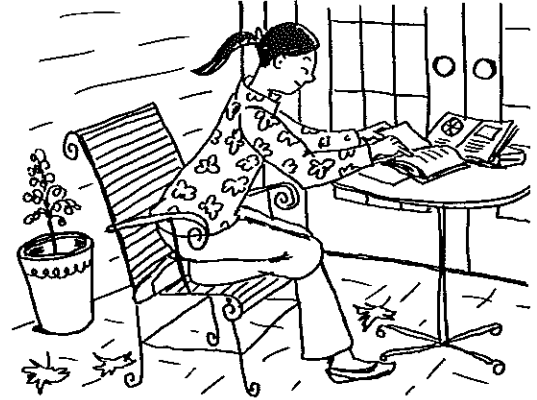
**A:** In the dictionary!



## Hints for homework

Amy has her evening planned. She'll do her math homework before dinner, then follow up dessert with English and science. Afterward, she can unwind from a busy day.

Sound impossible? It's not. Help your child make homework go like clockwork with these strategies.



### Think it through

Before your youngster begins, have her make a to-do list. *Example:* write a poem, read a history chapter, solve 10 math problems.

Then, suggest that she number the tasks, from toughest to easiest, and start with the hard stuff. This "save the easiest for last" strategy will help her finish on a high note, perhaps inspiring her to get in some extra studying.

### Think about time

Ask your child to consider different time slots she can use to get work done. For instance, maybe she could set aside a weekend morning or Sunday night.

Also, some middle graders have time during study period or after lunch to tackle homework. Encourage your child to complete one assignment at school each day. The more she does then, the more time she'll have for fun later.

### Think positive

Help your middle grader see homework as a chance to prove her independence by getting her work done on time and doing it by herself. Boost her confidence by telling her, "Homework gives you a chance to show all that you know." And give her a thumbs-up when she does just that. 👍

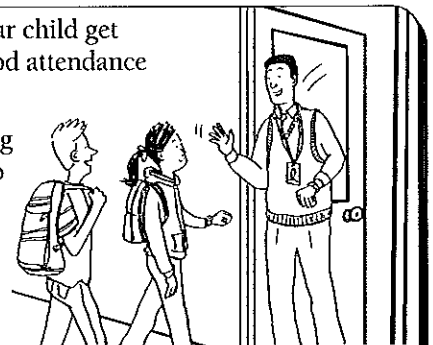
## Be there!

Being in school all day, every day, helps your child get the most out of middle school. Encourage good attendance with these ideas:

- Point out that there is no substitute for being in class. Your youngster needs to be present to hear teachers explain concepts, to participate in group projects and class discussions, and to ask questions.

- Schedule doctor, dentist, and orthodontist appointments for before or after school hours whenever possible. If you can't, try to arrange them for lunchtime.

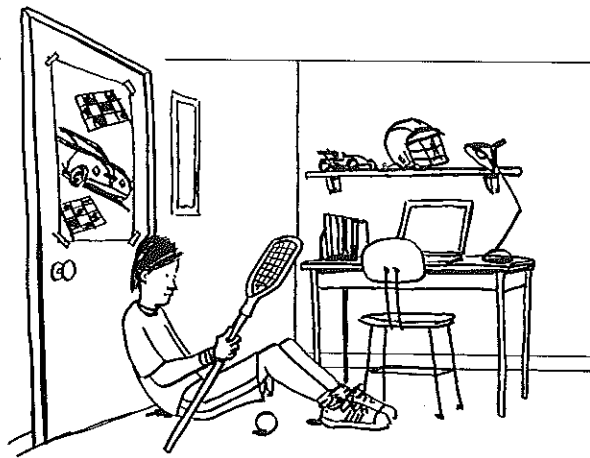
- It will be easier for your child to get up on time for school if he has had at least nine hours of sleep. Set a reasonable bedtime, and make sure he puts away electronic devices so he isn't tempted to stay awake to read messages or play games. 👍



# Emotions in the middle

Moody, private, self-conscious...if this sounds like your middle grader, you're not alone. At this age, his body and emotions are changing rapidly. Here are ways to help him cope.

**Managing moods.** Physical growth and worries about friends, sports, and schoolwork can cause moodiness. Let your child know you're available to talk. A quiet statement, such as "I remember what it feels like not to be asked to join a team," can invite him to open up about what's bothering him.



**Finding privacy.** It's natural for your youngster to want some time to himself. He might close his bedroom door or walk outside to take a phone call, for example. Show him that you respect his growing need for privacy by giving him space.

**Fitting in.** Many middle graders feel self-conscious. Being part of a group of people who share his interests can help your child focus on his strengths and feel more confident. Encourage him to participate in at least one activity (basketball team, student government, math club). 👍



## Acts of kindness

It's free, it can be big or small, and it can make your child feel good whether she gets it or gives it away. What is it? Kindness!

Middle graders who are considerate get along better with classmates and adults. Try these suggestions.

### Take action

Encourage your tween to be kind. If there is a new student in her classes, ask how *she* might feel if *she* were new. Then, she can think of ways to make the new girl feel welcome, such as introducing herself or sitting with her at an assembly.

### Celebrate

Comment on your child's kind behaviors. You might say, "That was so nice of you to put away your brother's laundry while he's sick." Or declare "Kindness Week." Have family members write down random acts of kindness they see each other do, and take turns reading them aloud at dinner. 👍



## Q & A Dealing with cyberbullying

**Q** How can I help my middle grader stay safe from online bullying?

**A** First, explain that what may seem like common online behavior can be cyberbullying. If friends post or share embarrassing photos or videos of others, classmates spread rumors on cell phones, or peers send hurtful messages via social media, that's crossing a line. If done purposely and repeatedly, it's considered cyberbullying.

Also, point out that what happens online may have serious, real-life consequences. A humiliating photo gone viral could cause the victim to stay away from friends or hurt herself. And the bully can get into trouble at home, at school, or even with the law.

If your teen receives a bullying email, text, or social media message, tell her not to respond. That may make the situation worse. Instead, have her save or print it to keep a record. Then, she should block the sender and tell you about it so you can decide what to do, such as notifying your Internet service provider or the school. 👍



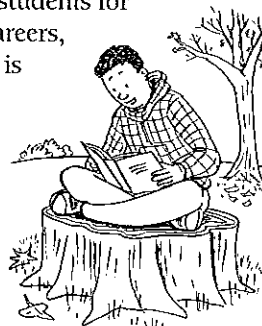
## Parent to Parent More nonfiction reading

My son, Kevin, reads mostly fiction, but his language arts teacher said the class will read lots of nonfiction this year. The reason, she said, is to prepare students for high school, college, and careers, where "informational text" is important.

The teacher suggested a few ways to help at home. First, she said, we could leave the newspaper out and mention articles about topics that affect him. For example,

I pointed out stories on road construction where Kevin rides his bike and on festivals we might attend.

Also, the teacher said to encourage our son to read nonfiction books about things he's interested in. The next time I went to the library, I brought home books about car racing and a biography of one of Kevin's favorite drivers. I was happy to see him reading one rather than watching TV the other night! 👍



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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