

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Quiz yourself

When your child reads a textbook, encourage him to quiz himself periodically. This helps him keep track of how well he's understanding the material. After he finishes reading each section, he can ask himself questions based on the subheadings or boldfaced words. ("What are *concurrent* powers?") If he doesn't know the answer, he should reread that part.

### Photo-in-a-jar

Your tween can give presents to teachers, relatives, and friends without spending a lot of money. For each gift, have her put a photo into a clean, empty glass jar and add a special message and small decorations. For instance, she could write "You rock!" and include pebbles along with a picture of herself with a favorite teacher.

### An important influence

You may be surprised to know that parents are the biggest influence on how children view underage drinking. Your tween cares what you think (even when he doesn't show it), so it's best to share your views early and often. In fact, experts suggest having a conversation with your child as early as age 11—then bringing up the topic on a regular basis.

### Worth quoting

"Let us love winter, for it is the spring of genius." *Pietro Aretino*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has 50 feet and sings?

**A:** The school chorus!



## Tips for strong writing

Being able to write well will help your child in all her classes—and it can prepare her for college or a career when she's older. Share these ideas for practicing writing skills.

### Connect with your reader

Encourage your tween to think about her audience, or who she's writing for. If she's creating a family newsletter to share with faraway relatives, she should consider what kind of information they would be interested in. For example, they might want to hear about her band competition or her baby brother's latest milestones.

### Offer opinions

Reviewing products and services lets your middle grader practice writing an "argument"—something she'll need to do in her classes. When she tries a new face wash or bike repair shop, she could write what she liked and didn't like about it, and why. Then, she can post it on a site such as *amazon.com* or *yelp.com*.

*Note:* Remind her not to use her real name or other identifying information.



### Write with others

Your child may need to write *collaboratively* when she does a group project. For instance, classmates might write different sections of a report, give each other feedback, and discuss changes. Suggest that she write a story with friends using a free site like *google.com/docs*. That way, they can read, comment on, and edit each other's work in real time, which can be both fun and creative. 👍

## Seasonal family fun

Your tween may be more excited about participating in family outings if he has a say in what you do. This winter, consider letting him take the lead with these suggestions:

- Ask him to list things he would like to do together. *Examples:* Attend the community pancake breakfast, shop for holiday gifts, go sledding. Then, choose an item from his list each week.
- Appoint your youngster to be your family tour guide. Let him pick places to take visiting relatives or look into out-of-town activities if you're traveling. He might find a light display, a town parade, or an orchestra concert, for instance. *Tip:* He can check town or county websites or tourism bureaus for ideas. 👍



# Kindness, inside and out

Encourage your middle grader to choose kind thoughts, words, and actions. He'll feel good about himself and make life pleasant for those around him. Here's how.

**Thoughts.** Ask your child to pay attention to unkind thoughts—and try to change his thinking. For instance, if he catches himself thinking, “My sister is so slow!” he might switch it to, “She likes to take her time.” This may help him feel kinder and more patient.



**Words.** What your tween says can have a big impact on others, so remind him to choose his words carefully. If a basketball teammate misses a free throw, he could compliment him on the shots he did make rather than making him feel bad about the one he missed. Try role-playing at home so your child can practice coming up with kind responses in various situations.

**Actions.** Suggest that your middle schooler keep his eyes and ears open for people who need help. He might get a library book from a high shelf for a younger patron or offer to feed the neighbors' cat when they're out of town. Doing kind acts, whether large or small, will make him feel good about himself and encourage him to be kind in the future. 👍



## One thing at a time

If your child surfs online or texts while doing homework, it will take her longer to finish—and she probably won't learn as much as she would otherwise. Help her stay focused with these tips.

### Know the facts

Tweens may believe multitasking doesn't affect them because “everyone” does it. But research shows that our brains work more efficiently when we concentrate on one thing at a time. Suggest that your middle grader time herself doing five math problems while multitasking and then time herself for the next five with electronics turned off. She is likely to see a difference.



## Parent to Parent It's freezing!

My son Andrew complains every winter about the cold. This year, I remembered that his science teacher mentioned taking advantage of the weather to do experiments at home. I checked the materials she had sent and suggested that Andrew try one on the freezing point of liquids.

So on a day when the temperature dipped below freezing, he put equal amounts of soda, water, milk, and orange juice in separate plastic or paper cups and set them outside. He predicted the order in which they would freeze and checked them every 5 minutes to record the results. Next, he experimented with how salt affects the freezing point by letting the cups thaw and then adding a teaspoon of salt to each one. He was pretty surprised to find out the difference salt made.

I'm not sure Andrew will ever love the cold weather, but at least the freezing temperatures have given him a chance to learn about science! 👍



### Set aside time

When your youngster has to create flyers for a club event or write a student council speech, encourage her to devote a period of time to doing only that. She can avoid the temptation to multitask by putting away her cell phone and closing social media apps or sites on her tablet or computer. 👍

## Q & A "That's so embarrassing..."

**Q** My daughter always says I'm embarrassing her. What can I do?

**A** You're not alone. Middle graders are concerned about what other people think of them, and they want their own identity and space as they become more independent. Because of all this, it's common for them to claim their parents are embarrassing.

Try to notice what makes your child self-conscious and to avoid those things when possible. Maybe she doesn't

want you calling her by a childhood nickname or using tween slang in public, for example. You might also limit physical affection in front of others. Perhaps you could wink and say, “Good luck,” instead of hugging her before a game.

Even though your daughter's attitude may be hurtful at times, remind yourself it's not personal—it's just another stage in her growth. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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