

# Middle Years

Working together for school success



## Short Stops

### Fun with fiction

Your child can find creative-writing ideas in unexpected places. Perhaps he'll write about a funny incident in gym class or put a modern twist on a fairy tale he reads to a sibling. Suggest that he carry a small notebook for jotting down possibilities. Then, when he has an assignment or just feels like writing, he'll have ideas ready.

### Making it right

An apology means more if your youngster follows up on it. When she makes a mistake, ask her what her plan is for the future. For example, say you have to get out of bed to tell her to turn down her music. After she says "I'm sorry," she might tape a sign to her speakers that reads "Turn the volume down at bedtime."

### Stepparents and tweens

It can take time for a new family to bond. Try inviting your stepchild to join you in an activity you both enjoy, like fishing or going to car shows. If he doesn't want to go along, say, "Maybe next time." Keep asking, and let him adjust at his own pace.

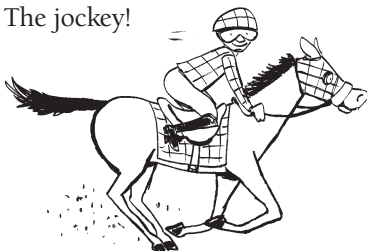
### Worth quoting

"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."  
*William James*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What can go as fast as a racehorse?

**A:** The jockey!



## What's your style?

Information clicks with students in different ways. Perhaps your child learns best by discussing material with classmates. Or maybe she needs to find connections between ideas or to read about a topic first. Most likely, she uses a combination of learning styles.

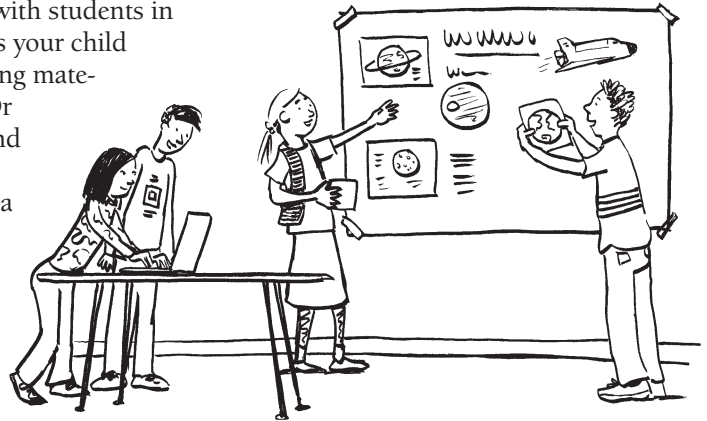
Here are a few ways youngsters learn, along with tips for getting the most from each.

### Social

A social learner enjoys interacting and collaborating. She's good at working in groups and participating in class discussions. If your middle grader likes learning with others, suggest that she study with friends. Or offer to listen while she summarizes a novel out loud or brainstorm science project ideas.

### Logical

Is your tween good at solving puzzles and problems? Does she easily recognize



patterns and understand step-by-step directions? She may be a logical learner. Encourage her to rewrite class notes in outline form. When she studies, she can draw charts and diagrams.

### Verbal

Verbal learners like reading, writing, and talking. If this sounds like your youngster, suggest that she use rhymes, songs, or abbreviations to help her remember information. She might also make up word problems to go with math equations. 👍

## Family volunteering

Volunteering as a family is one way to introduce your child to community service. Here are ways he can do his part and gain volunteer experience:

- Stop by the public library to ask about opportunities. Your family might reshelve books or lend a hand during events or programs (book sales, English or Spanish conversation clubs).

- Call nursing homes or assisted-living communities. Your family could help with activities, such as making crafts or reading aloud.

- Children ages 8–13 can volunteer with Special Olympics if a parent or guardian goes with them. Click on your state at [specialolympics.org](http://specialolympics.org) to see what's available. 👍



# Say no to drinking

Up to 40 percent of eighth-graders report trying alcohol at least once. Whether they drink to see what it's like or to act cool, knowing *why* children say yes can help you provide reasons to say no.

**"I'm bored."** Your youngster may have heard that drinking is fun. Tell him that it's *not* fun to throw up, pass out, or get arrested—all of which can happen when children drink. Then, help him realize there are lots of fun alcohol-free activities. He and his friends might go to the batting cages, play pickup hockey, or attend dances at a teen center.



**"I want to belong to the popular crowd."** Finding friends who don't drink is key. Try to steer your middle grader toward activities with kids who aren't known to be drinkers (ask neighbors or parents of older children for suggestions). Having friends in that group can make him less interested in belonging to the drinking crowd and give him the confidence to say no to alcohol.

**"I'm so stressed out."** Even children this age might use alcohol to cope with problems (arguments with friends, pressures of schoolwork, their parents' divorce). Talk about healthy ways to relieve stress instead. He might confide in a trusted adult, exercise, or work on his favorite hobby. For more serious situations, your child may need to meet with a counselor. 👍

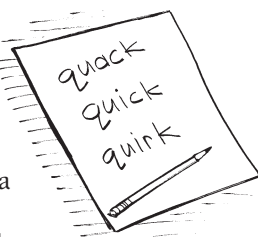


## Activity Corner Word games

Word games are not only fun, they help build vocabulary and spelling skills. Here are two to try.

### Word morph

Have your youngster write a five- or six-letter word at the top of a sheet of paper. Let family members take turns making a new word by changing one letter in the last word written. *Example:* quack, quick, quirk. When you can't make any more words, pick a new word and play again.



### Word staircase

Each player writes the numbers 4 to 12 down the left side of her paper. One person picks a two-letter combination that often begins words (en, cr, ph) and sets a timer for five minutes. Next to each number, write a word with that many letters and beginning with the letters chosen. *Example:* For en, put "envy" beside 4 and "enact" by 5. To win, come up with the most words that no one else used. 👍

## Q & A

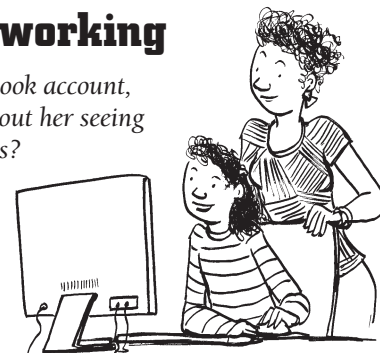
### Responsible social networking

**Q** My sixth-grade daughter wants a Facebook account, but I think she's too young, and I worry about her seeing inappropriate posts. Are there other options?

**A** Explain to your child that Facebook users must be 13. Just as she had to wait for other privileges, like staying up later, she'll need to wait to join Facebook.

In the meantime, consider *everloop.com*, *imbee.com*, or *gianthello.com*. These sites are designed for younger children and offer parental controls. For instance, you approve new friends, determine whether your middle grader can chat, and get reports about her online activity.

When she's online, encourage her to think carefully about the words or pictures she posts. For example, would she want her grandmother to read what she's writing? Would she want to see the photo hanging in the school hallway? If not, she might not want to make it public online either! Being careful now will help her get in the habit of maintaining a good online reputation. 👍



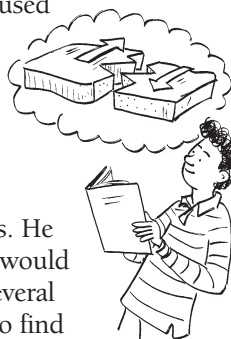
## Parent to Parent A "teachable moment"

Earthquakes are unusual in our area, so when we felt a small one, our son Chad had lots of questions. What caused it? Could it happen again? His curiosity reminded me of when he was little and fascinated by rainbows or by ants carrying crumbs.

I suggested that Chad get a library book about earthquakes. He was surprised to learn that we would probably feel aftershocks for several weeks. He also looked online to find

out when there had been earthquakes in our area before.

Chad told his science teacher what he had learned, and she called the earthquake a "teachable moment." Since then, we've started looking for other teachable moments to pique Chad's curiosity and encourage him to do research. Now he shares interesting discoveries with us, such as why we celebrate April Fools' Day or why 2012 is a leap year. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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