

# Middle Years

Working together for school success



## Short Stops

### Conserve resources

Your child can do her part to take care of the earth. Encourage her to think of a new way each week to conserve a resource or material (water, paper). For example, she might resolve to turn off the faucet while brushing her teeth or to use both sides of printer paper.

### Excited about tweens

It's normal to feel a bit sad as your middle grader grows up. But it helps to remember that you have a lot to look forward to. You may discover mutual interests and enjoy discussing various topics as his opinions develop. Plus, you get to witness the excitement of his first school dance, band concert, or other events.

### Historical cards

When your child needs to send a birthday card, suggest that she personalize it with a fact about the person's date of birth. She can use an almanac or a website (try [sfactmonster.com/day\\_inhistory](http://sfactmonster.com/day_inhistory)) and include a note such as "On this day in 1775, Patrick Henry gave his famous speech."

### Worth quoting

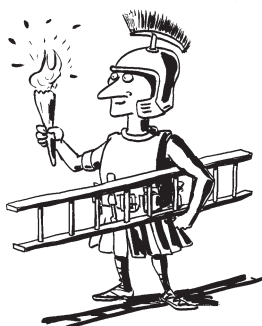
"The best luck of all is the luck you make for yourself."  
Douglas MacArthur

### Just for fun

#### Teacher:

When was Rome built?

**Student:** At night! My dad says Rome wasn't built in a day!



## Math for a lifetime

"When am I going to use this?" Your child might ask that question as he does his math homework. The answer? "Your whole life!" Show him how important math is and help him build skills by pointing out:

### How people use math at work

Ask your middle grader what he wants to be when he grows up. Then, help him find ways math is used in that field. If he's interested in city planning, for example, he could pay attention to roads and intersections. He might notice that some highway on-ramps are shorter than others or that certain traffic lights stay red longer in the mornings than in the evenings. Can he figure out how speed limits and traffic volume affect planners' decisions?

### How you use math

Get your child involved in math-related projects at home. You might have him calculate the square feet of the walls in a room you plan to paint (width  $\times$  length). Then, at the paint store, suggest that he look at a can of paint to see how



many square feet it covers and calculate how many cans you will need. Or you could take him with you to a car dealership and have him help you decide whether it makes more sense financially to lease or buy a car.

### How he can use math

Mention how math helps your youngster with everyday tasks. For instance, he can use estimation and subtraction to be on time. Say he's going to a party at 7 p.m. Have him think about what he needs to do first (feed the dog, get dressed, ride to the party) and estimate how long each task will take. Subtracting those estimates from 7 p.m. will tell him when he needs to start getting ready. 👍

## Sprint to the finish line

Your middle grader is beginning the last quarter of the school year. Help her finish strong by sharing these ideas:

- Encourage her to go the extra mile. For example, she might include graphics on a science project poster to make it clearer or proofread a paper one more time to be sure she hasn't missed any errors. She could also ask teachers about ways to earn extra credit.
- If friends invite her to hang out, she might be tempted to put off assignments. Suggest that she make a deal with herself: after she completes one step (say, research for a history paper), she can join them. 👍



# Siblings and friends

Whether they're giggling or squabbling, there's one thing siblings will always have: each other! Building a good relationship now can help them become lifelong friends. Here are three ways to strengthen their bond:

**1.** Look for ways your children can share good times. When one needs a partner for an activity (playing a game of Ping-Pong, rehearsing for a play), suggest that she ask the other to join her. Or pair them up for family events—they might paddle their own canoe or make party favors together for a reunion.



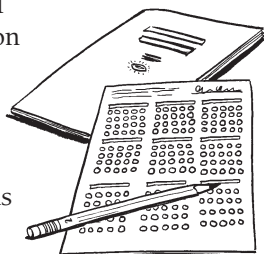
**2.** Suggest that siblings use their individual strengths to help each other. For example, one might teach the other to pitch a baseball. Or the child who loves to write can explain how she comes up with story ideas for English class.

**3.** Ask them to think of things they admire about each other, and encourage them to share their thoughts. They might jot compliments on each other's whiteboards ("You are a talented artist!") or post nice messages on the refrigerator ("Congrats on scoring the goal!"). If they do this regularly, getting along might become a habit. 👍

## Tips for standardized tests

As spring arrives, so do standardized tests. Here are some tips to help your child do well:

- Be sure he attends every class, every day. Teachers will review information he'll need to know for the exam. They may also give practice questions that can help your child prepare for the actual test.



- He should get about nine hours of sleep and eat a healthy breakfast before each day of testing (and every day!). Protein (eggs, milk) and healthy carbohydrates (banana, whole-wheat toast) will help him stay alert and think clearly.

- Encourage your middle schooler by wishing him good luck on the morning of a test and telling him you know he'll do his best. Your positive attitude can be contagious. 👍



## Q & A

### Handing over responsibilities

**Q** I feel like I do things around the house that my son should be doing. How can I help him be more responsible?

**A** Middle school is a good time for your child to take on more responsibility. Handling bigger tasks (laundry, lawn mowing) will give him skills that he'll need eventually when he lives on his own. Together, come up with ways for him to help—and consequences if he doesn't.

For example, show him how to wash clothes, and agree on a laundry schedule. If he puts it off and the washer isn't available, he won't have the clothes he needs. Or tell him he has to vacuum and dust the family room on a certain day. If he doesn't, he can't watch a movie until it's done.

You can help your child follow through by sticking with your new plan. Once he sees you mean business, he'll learn to be more responsible. 👍



## Activity Corner

### Are we there yet?

Arizona. Missouri. Louisiana. Does your child know where each state is located? Help her explore geography by playing this game.

**Materials:** paper, pencil, scissors, hat, U.S. map, game tokens, die

Ask your middle grader to list states' names on a sheet of paper and cut them apart to make 50 slips. Put the states in a hat, and let each family member draw one.



Place the map on the floor, and have each person put a token on the state you live in. Then, take turns rolling a die and moving that number of states in any direction. The object of the game is to be the first player to reach the state she drew. If you can't move without landing on a state that has a token on it or jumping over another token, your turn is over. 👍

## OUR PURPOSE

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

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