

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Book date

Children who read for fun build background knowledge that can help them with many subjects, from geography to history. Try setting aside a regular time to take your tween to the library. Browse the shelves, and then sit together and read silently or share interesting passages aloud.

### Mealtime manners

If your youngster is offered food she doesn't like at a friend's home, she might not be sure what to say. Tell her she can be polite by taking a small portion and trying it. If she has a food allergy, she can mention it and say, "Thank you anyway."

### DID YOU KNOW?

Middle graders need at least nine hours of sleep to be rested and alert for school. Set a reasonable bedtime, and encourage your child to unwind by dimming the lights and doing a quiet activity (reading, drawing, listening to soft music). To make falling asleep easier, he should avoid video games, cell phones, and TV.

### Worth quoting

"Be not afraid of growing slowly; be afraid only of standing still."  
*Chinese proverb*

### Just for fun

**Teacher:** What happened at the Boston Tea Party?

### Lindsay:

I don't know. I wasn't invited.



## On time for a new year

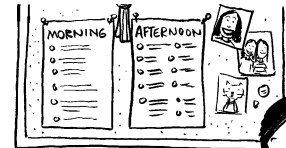
Good time-management skills make your middle schooler's day more predictable and help it go smoothly. Encourage your child to create good habits like these.

### Make lists

To-do lists can keep your youngster on track. She might make one for morning (shower, eat breakfast, take science project) and another for after school (eat snack, practice clarinet, do homework). Have her post each list where she can see it and check off activities as she goes. *Tip:* A calm morning starts the night before. Suggest that your youngster think about which tasks she could do before bed (lay out clothes, pack lunch or snack).

### Set priorities

Middle graders often try to crowd too many events into a day. By asking questions, you can help your tween figure out which things matter most. *Example:* "I know you want to fix your bike, but don't you have a quiz tomorrow?" For a week, encourage your child to keep track of how long tasks really take. She might



use a timer when she showers or walks the dog. Then, she'll know how much time to allow for each task.

### Plan for the unexpected

Encourage your youngster to regularly build in a few extra minutes for each item on her schedule. For instance, if she gets up five minutes earlier, a misplaced student ID won't be such a big deal. She can also use this strategy with schoolwork, especially when it comes to long-term projects. She might plan to complete a research paper two days before it's due—then she'll have more time if she needs it. 👍

## Talking to teachers

When your child needed help in elementary school, you probably spoke with his teachers. Now that he's in middle school, he can be responsible for doing that himself. Share these suggestions.

**When.** Your middle grader should ask teachers when they're available to answer questions or give extra help. Some teachers might prefer to meet during a planning period or lunch, while others may have time before or after school.

**What.** Tell your child to be specific about what he needs. He can show the teacher a homework assignment or his textbook ("I don't know how they got this answer in chapter 2").

**How.** Explain that he should be courteous even if he doesn't agree with a teacher. For example, he can ask politely for an explanation on a grade ("I'm not sure where I went wrong on this essay"). 👍

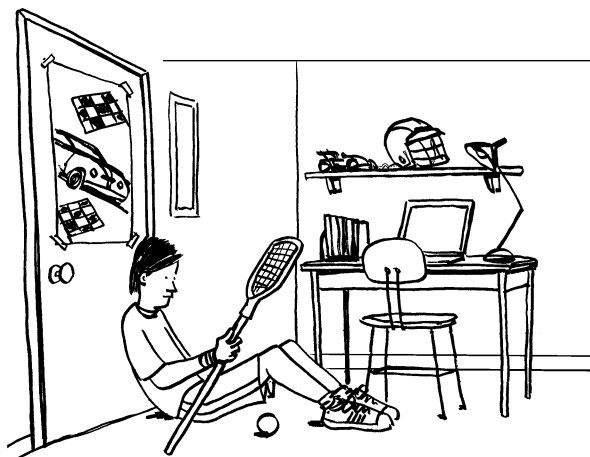


# Emotions in the middle

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 encourage him to open up about what's bothering him.

## Finding privacy

It's natural for your middle grader 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.

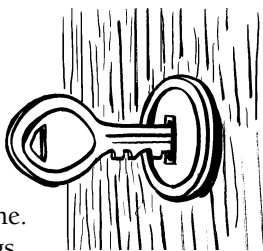
## Fitting in

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

## Alone after school?

Now that your child is in middle school, she may be too old for after-school day care. How can you make sure she's safe if she gets home before you do? Consider these rules:

- Talk about strangers. Your youngster should lock the door when she gets home and not open it for anyone. If the phone rings, she shouldn't tell the caller that she's alone.



- Decide whether friends are allowed to visit. If so, you might permit just one at a time and have your child get permission in advance.

- Agree on how to stay in touch. Maybe you'll have her call or text you as soon as she gets in the door each day.

- Review household safety. Let your middle grader know whether she can use things like the Internet, the stove, or candles when you're not there. 👍



## Q & A Write about now

**Q** My daughter will have more writing assignments this year, and she has struggled with writing in the past. What can I do to help?

**A** Regular practice is a key to better writing. Suggest that your daughter start a journal. It's a quick, low-pressure way for kids to fit in a little writing every day. Let her decorate a spiral notebook or get a diary at the store. She can write in it before she goes to sleep each night.

Perhaps she'll jot down thoughts about the day's events, facts related to a topic she's interested in (horses, art), or questions she has about a subject she's studying. Knowing that her words are for her eyes only will make her feel more comfortable writing. And as she gets used to writing, she'll discover that her words will flow more smoothly—both in her journal and when she does written assignments for school. 👍



## Parent to Parent Family-friendly nights

Our lives are so hectic that we don't get much time to share fun activities during the week. So I asked a few friends how they make the most of their evenings together.

My friend Melissa suggested putting creative "conversation starters" in a bowl on the dinner table. I decided to try this and asked everyone to come up with questions. My son wrote, "Why are organic foods popular?" and I came up with, "Which movie star would you want to have dinner with?"



The questions have already led to some thought-provoking discussions.

We've also tried an idea from our neighbor Dan. He said his family takes "picture walks" around the neighborhood with their cell phones (ringers off!). They snap interesting photos and share them with each other. We tried this, and my daughter took an excellent close-up

of a pinecone. Now we're enjoying our walks together, and we're taking some good pictures, too! 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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