

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Create a poem

Encourage your child to experiment with language by writing a family poem. Together, make up a title about something your family loves (*Tasty Tortilla Soup*). Then, write your last name down the side of a piece of paper, and take turns writing a line of the poem that begins with each letter. Let your tween read your poem aloud when you're done.

Keep passwords private

Middle graders sometimes share phone and computer passwords with friends. Explain to your child that people who access her accounts can read personal messages or even send emails or post items in her name. If friends ask, she could simply say, "I don't tell anyone my password." If she has shared passwords already, tell her to change them.

DID YOU KNOW?

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

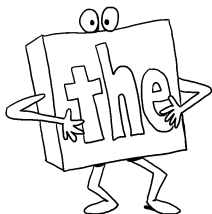
Worth quoting

"I am always doing that which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it." *Pablo Picasso*

Just for fun

Q: What do Catherine the Great and Kermit the Frog have in common?

A: The same middle name!



Discipline for tweens

When your middle grader was younger, you may have put her in time-out when she broke a rule. Now that she's older, discipline might not seem as clear-cut. Consider these tips for encouraging good behavior as she grows.

Get her input. Taking your tween's opinion into account will make her more likely to follow rules. Work together to put rules in writing, and compromise where you can to show that you recognize her increasing maturity and independence. For example, you might agree that she can wear lip gloss but not lipstick. Let her know you won't budge on some rules, like meeting her curfew and not drinking alcohol.

Put her in charge. Tell your middle grader that she's responsible for finding ways to stick to the rules. Say one rule is that you need to know where she is at all times. If her plans change, she must tell you or get a message to you *and* make sure you received it—otherwise,

she needs to stay put. Or if she tends to forget the rule about picking up after herself, she could post clean-up checklists around the house.

Keep it logical. When you need to discipline your tween, choose a consequence that makes sense and is directly related to the rule she broke. If she sneaks on more makeup, maybe she can't wear lip gloss for a certain period of time. Or perhaps she can't go out with friends because she has to stay home to clean up. 👍



Prepared for standardized tests

Does your middle schooler have state tests coming up? Review these strategies before testing begins:

■ Knowing how to approach different kinds of questions will help him score higher. For instance, on multiple-choice sections, he could cover up the answers while he reads the question. If the answer he thought of is listed and the other options don't make more sense, he can be pretty confident he's right.

■ Have your child find out whether he'll lose points for wrong answers. If not, it's best to guess. Also, if scrap paper is allowed, he can use it to work out problems and to keep his place on the answer sheet. 👍



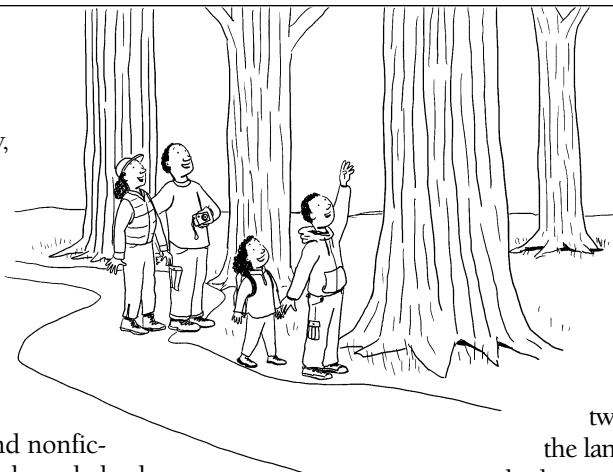
I knew that!

Each time we learn something new, our brains automatically try to relate it to what we already know. That means the more we learn, the easier it is to learn! Try these ideas to help your tween collect “background knowledge” that he can access when he encounters new information.

Read

Reading a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction is a sure ticket to building a large knowledge base. Make sure your middle schooler has a library card—and visits the library often.

As he reads books set in different lands or time periods, he will learn facts about geography and history. Science fiction



can teach about outer space, while biographies give him information on specific people and accomplishments. Ask him to tell you about things he’s studying in school that relate to a book he has read.

Travel

If you take a vacation or visit out-of-town relatives, encourage your tween to notice his new surroundings. Is the land flat or hilly in South Carolina? What do the trees look like in Northern California?

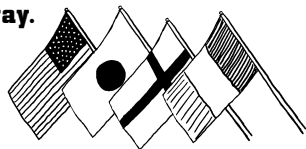
Whether you’re away or at home, take time to see local attractions. Going to museums, historical sites, or nature centers will give him all kinds of background knowledge. Your child can even take a “trip” without leaving home. Suggest a virtual field trip to a volcano (vulcan.wr.usgs.gov/Volcanoes), for example, or have him search for videos that take him inside an atom or a cell. 👍

Teach tolerance

Your child probably comes into contact with people from different cultures regularly. Here are ways you can teach her about tolerance:

■ Lead the way.

Your middle grader learns how to treat others by watching you. If she sees you showing respect for people who are different from you, she probably will, too.



■ **Appreciate diversity.** Tell your tween to imagine how boring dinner would be if everything tasted the same. Similarly, you can say, the world would be far less interesting if everyone looked alike or believed the same things.

■ **Talk about feelings.** If your child puts people down because of how they speak or act, ask her how she’d feel if someone insulted her language or clothing. Discuss your family’s culture and why it’s important to you. Then, have her compare her feelings to the way she imagines others feel about their traditions and customs. 👍



Q & A

Friendships: A revolving door

Q My daughter seems to have a different “best friend” every week. Is this normal?

A Friendships can change frequently in middle school. It’s normal for kids to outgrow relationships and to sometimes feel closer to one friend than to another.

You might let your daughter know that no matter who her “best” friend is, she can still remain friends with many people. Mention the various social circles in your own life, such as your book club friends and your work buddies.

Also, remind your child to treat everyone kindly, including classmates she may have grown apart from. Remaining friendly will leave the door open for them to spend more time together in the future. 👍



Parent to Parent

Bringing up grades

My son Tyler has always done pretty well in school. So when he started bringing home papers and quizzes with low grades, I knew something was wrong.

I asked him what was going on, and he admitted that he didn’t have enough time to study and do all of his work. After we looked at his schedule, I told him he needed to drop one activity.

He was disappointed, but he decided that he would take a break from the student events committee and use the time for homework instead.

Also, we agreed that if the extra time working on his own doesn’t help, he can ask his teachers about study groups that he could join.

We both feel better now that he has a plan—and hopefully, his grades will soon be on their way back up. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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