

# Middle Years

Working together for school success



## Short Stops

### Character challenge

Make family members aware of good character

by challenging them to be “character scouts.” Ask everyone to be on the lookout for traits like gratitude and courage (saying “thank you” for a small act: facing fears to try new activities), and point them out. *Idea:* Choose a trait to find each week.

### Foreign-language tip

Is your middle schooler studying a foreign language? Encourage him to watch movies in the language he’s learning (he can find them at the library or on movie channels). He can also play games online. For example, at [www.languagegames.org](http://www.languagegames.org), he can play Hangman and do crossword puzzles and word searches in another language.

### Shifting moods

Tweens often go through ups and downs because of changing hormones. When your child seems out of sorts, that’s when she most needs you to remain calm. Showing you have control will comfort her and make her feel secure, even if she doesn’t realize it at the time.

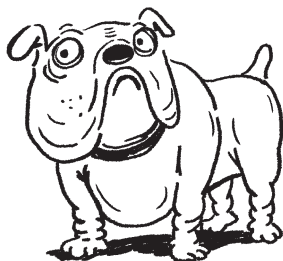
### Worth quoting

“The fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose.” *Hada Bejar*

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why are bulldogs so wrinkled?

**A:** It’s too difficult to iron them.



## Organized for success

It’s a big jump from elementary to middle school. Not only will your child have multiple classes and teachers, he’ll probably have more homework, papers, and books. Being organized can help him cope with these changes like a pro.

Share these suggestions with your middle grader.



**Do a “run through.”** Have him think through his day. What will he need for each class? Help him decide what to carry and to plan times to trade books and notebooks at his locker. At the end of each day, he should check his assignments so he knows what to take home.

**Avoid clutter.** Encourage your middle schooler to weed out what he doesn’t need by sorting papers and supplies every Friday, so he’s ready for the week ahead. Then, he can group old assignments, quizzes, and tests together for safekeeping.

**Have a daily plan.** Using a dry-erase board or an agenda book can help your child stay on top of how he spends his time. Suggest that he plan each day of the week with slots for school, studying, and other commitments (debate team, sports practice). If he doesn’t have some time to relax, he may need to cut back on something.

*Note:* Let your middle grader know that it’s okay to change his strategies until he finds the one that works best for him. 👍

## Be involved

You can help your child improve her grades and have a better attitude toward school simply by staying involved. Here are some ideas.

### At home:

- Provide transportation when necessary.

For instance, your middle grader may need to go to the library to do research or to a friend’s house to work on a project.

- Talk about what you’re learning (a new computer system at work, vegetarian cooking). You’ll show her that learning is a lifelong process.

### At school:

- Check the office for ways to volunteer. You might chaperone a field trip, help stock a parent-resource center, or set up or clean up after club events.

- Attend activities. Even if your child isn’t involved in the winter musical, for example, show your support by going as a family. 👍



# Simply noted

Taking good notes lays a foundation for learning. Writing the information down helps your child process what she hears. Reviewing it will help her remember it later. Share these ideas.

## Pick out what's important

Rather than writing down every word in a lecture, identify what matters most. If a teacher emphasizes a point by writing it on the board, repeating it, or raising his voice, chances are it could show up on a test. Lists (causes of the recession), dates (the year your state was founded), and time lines (history of the U.S. space program) are usually important.



## Create your own shorthand

It will be easier to keep up with what a teacher says if you use abbreviations and symbols. You might leave out the vowels in words (“btwn” for “between”) and use abbreviations such as “b/c” for “because” or symbols like “&” for “and.” Find sug-

gestions online by Googling “note-taking shorthand.” One helpful site is [www.english-zone.com/study/symbols.html](http://www.english-zone.com/study/symbols.html).

## Fill in what's missing

If you don't hear a key word or point, ask the teacher to repeat it. You can do this during the lecture, since other students may also need it repeated, or after class. Or you could compare notes with a classmate. 👍

# The rundown on rumors

Your middle schooler has probably overheard people telling a rumor about someone. Tell her that this is wrong—and that she can help stop the rumor mill.

Start by explaining that rumors are often untrue or greatly exaggerated. What starts out as a fairly insignificant comment can quickly get blown out of proportion as it spreads from one person to another.



When your child hears a rumor, she should ask herself if it could damage someone's reputation. Would she want people saying similar things about her? If not, she shouldn't repeat it.

Instead, suggest that she find a reason to excuse herself (“I have to get to class”) or change the subject (“What did you think of the science quiz?”). 👍



## Parent to Parent

### Showing up for school

Last year my son asked to stay home from school when he felt he needed a day off. I wanted him to know that I wouldn't allow him to stay home “just because.”

I explained how important attendance is. Being in class where he can learn every day will help him keep up with his work and be better prepared for tests. If he misses class, it could take him a few days to catch up.

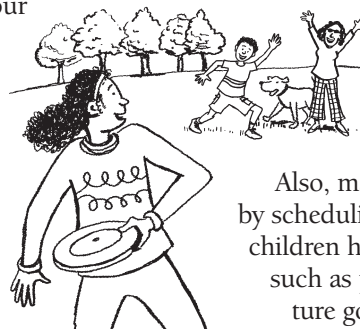
Then, I told him I expected him to attend school every day unless he was sick or there was a family emergency. Just like in a real job, he needs an acceptable reason to be absent, and learning this now will benefit him when he starts working later in life. 👍



## Q & A Time for family

**Q** I work full-time, and my kids are busy with schoolwork and activities at night. How can we find ways to spend time together?

**A** Staying connected to your children can be difficult, especially for today's busy families. But it's important. Spending time together helps you stay informed about what's going on in their lives and keeps the lines of communication open so they're comfortable talking to you.



Make the most of small moments whenever possible. For instance, you might invite your youngsters to ride with you to the post office or join you while you walk the dog. If your family has a favorite TV show, record it and watch it together over the weekend.

Also, make family time a priority by scheduling it in advance. Let your children help choose an activity, such as playing Frisbee or miniature golf. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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