

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Up with music

Darker mornings can tempt your middle grader to sleep longer. Help her get moving by suggesting that she wake up to music. She might set her alarm to her favorite radio station or playlist and then listen while she gets ready for school.

### Winter work

Does your child have homework during winter break? If so, encourage him to look over the assignments as soon as possible. That way, he can estimate how long the work will take and set aside time for it in his schedule.

### Healthy traditions

Ask your tween to help you make holiday recipes more nutritious. She might search online for lighter versions of traditional favorites, like cakes and cookies made with applesauce instead of butter. Or she can look for new, healthy ideas like cranberry smoothies or mashed cauliflower.

### Worth quoting

“I can’t do it’ never yet accomplished anything; ‘I will try’ has performed wonders.” *George P. Burnham*

### Just for fun

**Q:** I’m tall in the morning, short at noon, and gone at night, but I’ll be back soon. What am I?

**A:** A shadow!



## Paying attention in class

The ability to pay attention and ignore distractions during class is a key trait of successful students—and it’s something your child can learn to do. Share these tips with him.

### Start before the bell

Arriving on time and organizing his materials will help your middle grader get focused. For example, he should take out his textbook, notebook, and pen or pencil. He can also glance over last night’s homework before handing it in—it will refresh his memory about the previous day’s material and help him understand new information.

### Be active

The more he gets involved with what’s going on in class, the more attentive he will be. Suggest that he jot down questions he thinks of as the teacher talks. This will encourage him to listen closely to see if he answers them. If not, he can raise his hand to ask. He can stay focused



during group discussions, too, by writing down important points that others make, and by sharing his own ideas.

### Avoid distractions

Remind him to tune out activities or noises that aren’t part of the lesson. Sitting in the first row can help—he won’t be distracted by people in front of him, and he’ll have a better view of the board. If he uses a computer to take notes, he will need to turn off programs and close websites that aren’t class related. Also, he should make sure his phone is silenced and put away. 👍

## Our house: The place to be!

Opening your home to your child’s friends creates a win-win situation—she’s safe at home, and you get to meet her friends. Help her create a tween-friendly hangout with these ideas:

- Stock up on activities. Your youngster might fill a basket or cabinet with board games, a deck of cards, and magazines. Suggest that she add school supplies (sharpened pencils, notebook paper) so she and her friends can use the space to do homework, too.

- Set guidelines. For example, let her know that you expect her and her friends to clean up after themselves. On the flip side, you might agree to keep siblings out of the space when her friends visit. 👍



# What is social bullying?

Pass it on: gossiping and spreading rumors are examples of social bullying. But where is the line between harmless teasing among friends and behavior that is hurtful? Here are facts about bullying, along with ways your middle grader might handle different situations.



**What to do:** Say your tween's popular friends gossip about a quiet classmate who sits alone at lunch. Your child could try to change the subject ("So anyway, did you watch the game last night?") or defend the person being talked about ("You guys, she's probably really nice"). She might even plan to join the other girl for lunch the following day.

**Fact:** When well-liked students use their social status to put down less-popular classmates, it counts as bullying.

**Fact:** Spreading a rumor about someone to make others think less of the person is an example of bullying.

**What to do:** Your tween can help stop a rumor simply by not passing it on. If she hears friends talking about another girl's behavior at a party, she could say, "I don't think that's true, so I'm not going to repeat it." She might also approach the girl and offer to help clear things up.

*Note:* If your child feels threatened by a bully, she should talk to a trusted adult (parent, counselor). 👍

## Everyday science

Help your middle grader find the science in everyday life with these activities.

### Physics

Exploring the laws of physics can show your child why seat belts are important. Have him place a basketball on the seat next to him. What happens when you brake? (The ball rolls to the floor.) When a car stops, anything inside that's not restrained keeps moving. That's known as *inertia*—the tendency of a moving object to continue in the same direction unless an outside force stops it.



### Chemistry

Cooking often involves chemical reactions. For example, yeast converts the starch in flour to sugar. Then, the yeast "eats" the sugar, producing carbon dioxide bubbles. This process creates the gas pockets that make bread fluffy. Your teen can see how this works by stirring 1 packet active dry yeast and 2 tbsp. sugar into 1 cup warm water. Let him pour the mixture into a plastic bottle and stretch a balloon over the opening. The gas that forms will inflate the balloon! 👍



## Q & A

### Thumbs up for learning

**Q** Now that my son is in middle school, he says it's not cool to be smart. How can I change his mind?

**A** Try reminding your son of how good it feels to be successful. You might dig up an old test or paper that has a good grade or nice comments from the teacher. Post it on the refrigerator so he'll remember the sense of accomplishment that comes from doing well.

You can also show him that learning makes life more interesting. Tell him about a friend's teenager who is enjoying college or who landed a cool job. Explain that working hard now will prepare him for tougher classes in high school, which can lead to getting into college or finding a career he enjoys.

Finally, let him know that you expect him to study and do his best—even if he doesn't think it's cool right now. 👍



## Parent to Parent

### A special blend

Last winter, my daughter, Tamara, and I celebrated our first holidays with my new husband and stepson, Blake. I was a little nervous about how to make everyone feel included. Luckily, I got some good advice from a friend who has been remarried for several years.

My friend said that her family made it a point to keep old traditions while introducing new ones. So we asked our children to name favorite pastimes that they wanted to

continue. Tamara mentioned our annual brunch with all of her cousins. And Blake wanted to attend our town's winter carnival. Then, we came up with some new ideas, like sharing the highlights of our year on New Year's Eve.

Our holidays still had a few wrinkles, but the children seemed more comfortable with the changes since they got to have a say. And I think we're all looking forward to creating more memories this season. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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