

# Middle Years

Working together for school success



## Short Stops

### Engage your audience

The next time your child has to give a speech in school, suggest that she start with a question. For example, if her speech is about animals in Australia, she might say, "Did you know that a platypus is poisonous?" She'll grab her classmates'—and her teacher's—attention.

### Pumpkin delight

Autumn is the perfect time to try pumpkin recipes with your middle grader. You can roast the seeds or look online for other ideas. Pick out recipes you'd both like to try (pumpkin soup, pumpkin pancakes). Then, spend time together in the kitchen preparing a healthy dish.

### Tracking progress

Remind your child to keep tabs on his grades throughout the semester. As he receives grades (tests, essays, projects, classwork, homework), he can calculate his average based on the percentage that each one counts toward his grade. That way, he'll know where he stands and be able to focus on areas of concern.

### Worth quoting

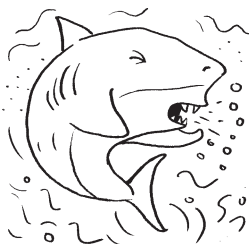
"The quieter you become, the more you can hear."

Ram Dass

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why do sharks live in saltwater?

**A:** Because pepper water makes them sneeze!



## Homework: A change of pace

Keep homework from becoming a daily grind for your middle grader by suggesting new approaches. These ideas can add variety to study time—and keep her motivated to do her best.

### Make it social

Encourage your youngster to invite friends over to do homework together. Working with a friend or in groups could boost her interest and learning. Classmates can share information and explain ideas to each other—and your child will get to spend time with her peers. *Note:* Suggest that she choose study buddies who work hard and take school seriously.

### Make it scenic

Doing homework in a different spot can add a refreshing twist. Your middle schooler might read an assignment while sitting on a pile of autumn leaves outside or head to the library and look for a cozy corner. Even moving to a porch or patio can provide a welcome change.



### Make it a contest

Suggest that your child compete with herself to make her work more exciting. For instance, she could time how long it takes her to finish a set of math problems and then try to beat her time on the next set. Or she could see how many problems she can solve in 10 minutes—and then how many she can answer in the next 10 minutes.

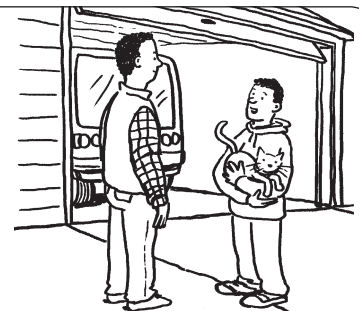
*Idea:* Suggest that your youngster give herself an incentive for finishing her work. For example, she might plan to go for a bike ride, give herself a manicure, or read a magazine. 👍

## Give respect, get respect

Show respect to your child, and chances are you'll get respect in return. Try these tips:

- Don't embarrass or make fun of your youngster—at home or in front of other people. Instead, treat him the way you treat your friends and coworkers and the way you want to be treated. He will be more likely to follow your lead and not embarrass you in front of your friends.

- When your child does something that angers or annoys you, give him the benefit of the doubt by listening politely to his side. Perhaps he forgot to close the garage door because your cat got out and he went to catch her. Listening respectfully to his explanation and not jumping to conclusions may teach him to behave that way, too. 👍

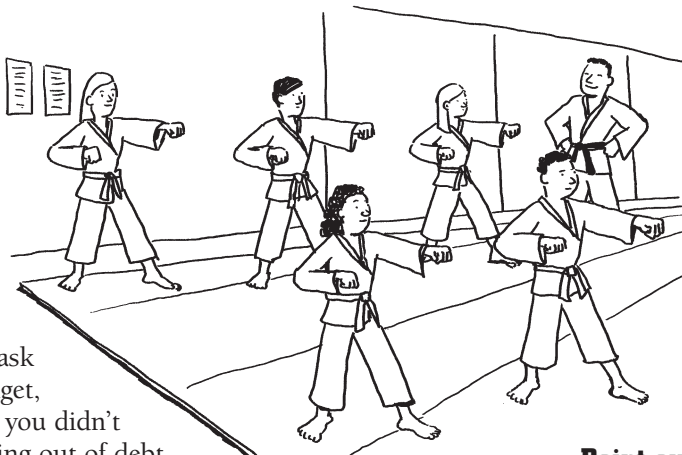


# Stick with it

It's not uncommon for children to start something they don't want to finish. But learning to stick with an activity will help your middle grader later in life. Here are some ways you can teach him to persevere.

**Set an example.** Talk with your youngster about times when you completed a task or an activity (worked out a monthly budget, kept up an exercise routine) even though you didn't feel like it. Explain that the rewards (staying out of debt, being healthy) are worth the effort.

**Be encouraging.** If your child talks about quitting an activity that's difficult for him, suggest that he try a little longer.



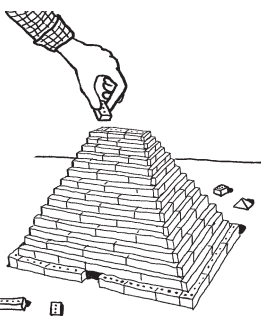
You might say, "You've only been doing martial arts for a month. Stay with it for another month and see how you feel. Then, we'll talk again." *Idea:* Your middle grader can ask for help—perhaps his instructor has suggestions for improvement.

**Point out progress.** When your youngster does persevere, let him know that you notice ("I understand that project was tough for you—great job getting it done"). Praising his persistence will help him make it a habit. 👍

# Spotlight on history

What ties intriguing characters, fascinating events, and important lessons together? History! Bring the past to life in your living room with these ideas:

■ Create something that represents a time period. Each person can choose her own project, or your family could work on one together. For instance, you might use Legos to make a model of an Egyptian pyramid or tape large sheets of paper on a wall and draw or paint an Aztec mural.



■ Have each family member pick a "secret identity" (Amelia Earhart, Ben Franklin) to research using the Internet or books. Then, host a game show where everyone asks yes-or-no questions and tries to guess each other's character. The winner is the person who guesses the correct answer with the fewest number of questions. 👍



## Q & A

### Handling stress

**Q** My seventh grader seems overwhelmed—I've noticed that she's been biting her nails almost constantly. How can I help her manage her stress?

**A** A little stress is normal for children this age. They're coping with puberty and greater responsibility at home and school.

Besides having your daughter eat well and get plenty of sleep, you can help her pinpoint what's worrying her. Is she concerned about friendships or the number of things she has to do? The two of you can discuss ways to handle problems (talk to her friends, cut back on activities). Having a plan will help her feel calmer.

Also, encourage your middle grader to spend time each day doing something she enjoys, such as playing guitar or rollerblading. Finally, if she feels herself becoming anxious, she can try closing her eyes and taking a few deep breaths. And as she becomes less stressed, hopefully she'll bite her nails less. 👍



## Parent to Parent

### A touchdown for school success

Fall means one thing to my son: football! I thought there must be a way to use this excitement to help Austin with school subjects, so I emailed his teachers for ideas.

His English teacher suggested that we get him reading more by checking out library books about football. She also said he could keep a journal for writing game summaries or making up his own football stories.

Next, Austin's algebra teacher recommended using football statistics for math practice. For example,

he might graph wins and losses or figure out the probability of each team making the Super Bowl.

Finally, his social studies teacher suggested hanging a U.S. map on the wall. She said Austin could mark each team's location and think about how the team name and mascot relate to the city.

Now that football season is in full swing, I'm happy to see Austin following his favorite team—and enjoying some new football activities! 👍



#### OUR PURPOSE

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

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www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540