

October 2009

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Organization tip

Most middle graders could use some help getting organized. Suggest that your child hang a large calendar where she can see it easily. She might use different-colored markers to post school assignments, club meetings, sports practices, and family plans.

Conserve resources

Ask your youngster to help your family be more environmentally friendly. Have him research ways you can conserve resources (switch to low-energy light bulbs, recycle more items, walk to friends' houses). He can look for ideas online or at the library. Then, try to adopt one of his ideas each month.

Logical thinking

A fun family game can teach logical thinking. Choose a number between 1 and 100. Have family members ask "yes/no" questions ("Is it odd?" "Is it more than 60?") until they guess the correct number. The goal is to get the answer within five questions.

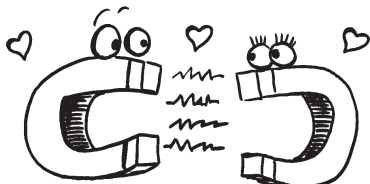
Worth quoting

"Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising every time we fail." *Confucius*

Just for fun

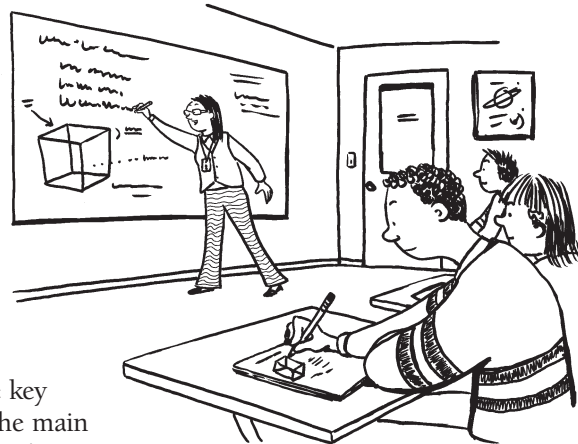
Q: What did one magnet say to the other?

A: I find you very attractive.



Be a great note taker!

Taking good notes is the first step toward preparing for quizzes and tests. Encourage your middle grader to listen carefully in class and write down important information so he'll have good notes to study from later. He should pay particular attention to:



What's emphasized

The teacher might introduce key points with phrases such as "The main thing to remember is..." or "That's important because..." She might also speak with more emphasis or gesture with her hands when going over material that will appear on a test.

What's on the board

If the teacher puts information in writing, your youngster should always copy it. For instance, she may post geometry formulas, dates of battles, or names of famous people.

What's repeated

To be sure students don't miss key points, a teacher may repeat them at the

end of a class. Your middle grader should be sure to jot down these statements and underline them.

What's highlighted in the book

As your child reads assigned chapters, he can write down bold-face words or items in the summary. Reading the text before class discussions will make note taking easier since he'll be familiar with the concepts.

Tip: Suggest that your middle grader review his notes the same day he took them (in study hall, at home). He can fill in any blanks and highlight the most important information. 👍

Spending sense

Teach your child smart spending habits now, and you'll help her become a financially responsible adult.

■ Talk to your middle grader about spending choices: "Socks are on sale, so we'll buy them today." "Let's check the library before we rent that movie."

■ Have your youngster help you grocery shop. Teach her to compare prices among brands and to look at the "price per unit." For example, point out that a gallon of milk costs more than a half gallon, but not twice as much.

■ Turn coupon clipping into a family activity. Your child could store each type of coupon (groceries, clothing) in a separate envelope. 👍



Enjoying your middle schooler

Is your child moody and secretive one moment and loving and helpful the next? Like most tweens, she's probably both a challenge *and* a pleasure.

Here are some ways to enjoy life with your middle grader.

Enter her world. What does your child like to do? Let her interests guide you. Join her for a game of table tennis, attend a poetry reading together, or visit a craft store to shop for knitting or beading supplies.



Seek her opinions. Ask your youngster what she thinks of the day's top news story, how she feels about animal rights, or what can be done about homelessness. Listening to her thoughts will let her know that you respect her viewpoints.

Keep her talking. Look for small windows of time

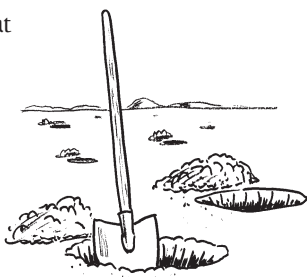
when your middle grader seems more interested in talking. Some children, for example, may be more talkative after school, and others may open up at bedtime. Take advantage of these moments to find out what's going on in school and with her friends. 👍



The world of books

Fiction can introduce your middle schooler to interesting people, distant places, and long-ago times. Try these ideas to build his reading comprehension as he discovers new books:

- Suggest that your child notice how a character changes from the beginning to the end of a story.



Say he reads *Holes* by Louis Sachar. He can follow the main character (Stanley) and see what happens to make him change.

- Knowing more about a book's setting will make the story come alive for your youngster. After reading *The Thief Lord* (Cornelia Funke), for instance, he might use an encyclopedia or a computer to learn more about Venice, Italy.

- Another idea is to compare two books that share a theme. For example, *Maniac Magee* (Jerry Spinelli) and *Belle Teal* (Ann Martin) both deal with racism. After your youngster reads them, ask him to tell you how the stories are alike and different. 👍

Parent to Parent Encouraging creativity

Last fall I was surprised when my daughter Becky didn't enter the school art fair. Since she's a talented painter who usually looks forward to the event, I asked her about it. She said, "My paintings aren't good enough."

I was concerned, so I called her art teacher for his input. Mr. Armel thought Becky was becoming self-conscious about her work, as kids often do. He suggested that she might feel more comfortable painting for her own enjoyment instead of worrying about the art fair.

I made sure we had paints and brushes at home, and whenever Becky used them, I took Mr. Armel's advice. I didn't pressure her to share her paintings, but I showed interest if she did. When she showed me her latest projects, I told her I was happy to see that she was experimenting with watercolors. I'm glad she's feeling more confident with her painting—and that she's having fun with it again. 👍



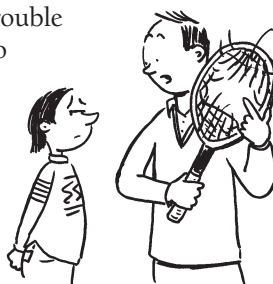
Q & A Telling the truth

Q Recently, I've caught my son in some lies. He broke some strings on my tennis racquet but said he didn't, and he told me he had finished his homework when he hadn't. How can I teach him to be honest?

A Middle graders may lie because they're afraid of getting in trouble or to keep from having to do something they don't want to do. Let your son know that fibs—no matter how small—are never okay. When people aren't truthful, they can lose others' trust. Also, point out that

telling small lies makes it easier to tell bigger ones.

When you catch your child in a lie, give him a chance to explain (the strings popped when he hit the ball; he was in the middle of his homework when a friend invited him to play basketball). Then, ask him what he thinks he could do to make up for lying to you. He might use his allowance to get the racquet restrung or do his homework right after school from now on. If he continues to be dishonest, talk to his school counselor. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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