

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Energy investigator

Learning about your family's energy use can

introduce your tween to science concepts—and give him a chance to help take care of the planet. Have him search online for top energy-wasters and then look for examples at home, like a fully charged laptop that's plugged in or a printer in "sleep" mode.

### Learning never ends

Let your middle grader see that education is a lifelong process by sharing things that you learn. For example, you might tell her what you're learning in your English class or show her a new yoga pose you're practicing.

### Asking for help

When your child struggles with a lesson or concept in school, encourage him to go to his teacher or a classmate for help. Reassure him that it's okay to admit he doesn't understand, and it's important to get assistance before he falls behind.

### Worth quoting

"Always do your best. What you plant now, you will harvest later."

Og Mandino

### Just for fun

**Q:** What falls but never gets hurt?

**A:** Snow!



## Become more responsible

As your child gets older, she'll need to take responsibility for more areas of her life. Managing her own schedule, schoolwork, and activities now will help her feel capable and give her practice for the future. Try these strategies.

### Hand over tasks

Pick routine jobs that your tween can take full responsibility for. She could pack her lunch, change and wash her sheets and towels, and replace light bulbs when they burn out, for instance. You might need to remind her of new duties at first, but gradually she should be able to do them without being asked. *Tip:* For more ideas, talk to parents of older children about tasks they gave out at different ages.

### Encourage planning

Thinking ahead will help your tween stay on top of her responsibilities. Talk about how she can do this. For example, if she's going to a sleepover on Saturday, she'll need to pack her overnight bag, return her library books that are due



that day, and arrange to come home in time on Sunday to finish homework.

### Avoid rescuing

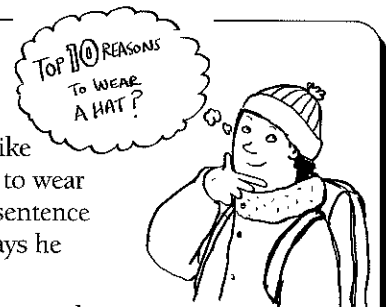
Let your middle grader experience the consequences of being irresponsible. If she forgets her project and sends you a text on the way to school, don't deliver the assignment to her. Or if she can't find her sports equipment because she didn't put it away, she will have to tell her coach. Receiving a zero or sitting out from practice may help her remember next time. 👍

## Let's brainstorm!

How can your middle grader come up with fresh ideas? Let him work on the art of brainstorming with these activities.

■ **Give prompts.** Ask him to make a top 10 list, like "Top 10 ways to eat potatoes" or "Top 10 reasons to wear a hat." You could also give him a fill-in-the-blank sentence ("I never \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_"), and see how many ways he comes up with to complete it.

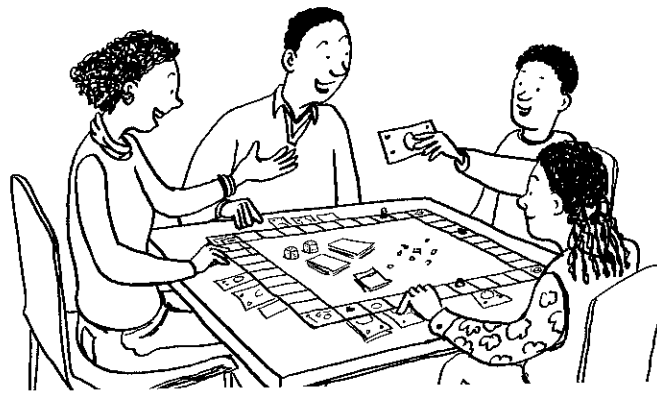
■ **Think as a family.** Have everyone suggest things to do during spring break or ways to share the bathroom. Allow family members to say what comes to mind, and write down all the suggestions without judging any of them. Explain that even if one idea won't work, it may lead to others that will. Together, review the list to find the best options. 👍



# Raise a money-smart tween

Research shows that parents are children's number one source for learning about money. But you don't have to be a financial expert to help your tween learn to handle finances. Consider these ideas.

**Conversations.** Talk to your middle grader about spending and saving. For example, you might mention that your rent is due monthly and that you set aside money every month for your quarterly car insurance bill. Also, explain that people try to save for emergencies (broken furnace, flat tire) and for the future (college, retirement).



**Shopping trips.** If your child needs new clothes, give him a set amount, and let him decide how to spend it. Encourage him to think about needs (jeans, if his are too short) vs. wants (shoes, if his fit and are in good condition). Then, suggest that he shop around for the

best deals—he may be able to save on items he needs and have money left for something he wants.

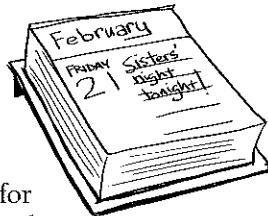
**Games.** Play Monopoly or Life to teach your tween about credit. Add a rule that a player who runs out of money can borrow from the bank but has to pay interest. Your middle schooler will see that interest quickly adds up and that the longer it takes to repay a loan, the more he'll pay out. 👍



## Build sibling bonds

Doing activities together can bring siblings closer. Here are three ways to promote good feelings and strengthen your children's bond.

**1.** Designate a "sibling night." Suggest that they set aside a night once or twice a month for activities they both enjoy. Sisters might watch a movie, play with their dog, or paint one another's nails, for example.



**2.** Attend siblings' games, performances, or ceremonies. Encourage them to cheer each other on, offer praise, and say a kind word if things don't go well.

**3.** Team up for projects. Have your children plan a party or paint a room together. Or challenge them to complete a task faster than you, such as cleaning up half of the basement while you do the other half. 👍

## "Am I normal?"

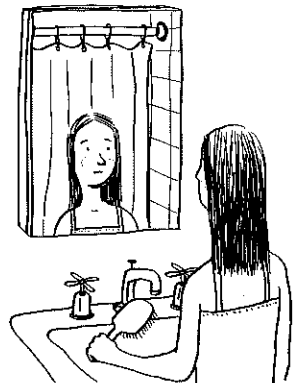
**Q & A**

**Q** My daughter isn't developing as quickly as her friends are. How can I help her feel better about herself?

**A** It's common for kids this age to compare themselves to their peers, especially if they are developing slower or faster than average. To reassure your daughter, you might get her a library book that addresses her concerns.

Also, let her know that children grow at different rates and that there's a wide range of "normal." Girls typically begin puberty between 8 and 13 and boys between 9 and 14. Then, it usually takes a few years to finish developing.

In the meantime, help your daughter focus on taking care of her body to boost her self-confidence. Eating healthy foods, staying physically active, and having proper hygiene can help her feel good about herself and her appearance. 👍



**Parent to Parent**

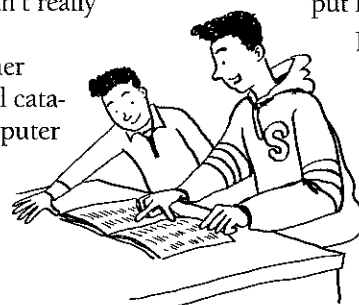
## Choosing classes

Last year, my son Daniel picked out electives based on what he thought would be easy. One class was harder than he expected, and the other didn't really interest him.

This year, his older brother showed him his high school catalog. Daniel saw several computer science courses that he'd like to take when he's older, so he decided to sign up for an introductory computer class now.

When he met with his school counselor, she said that looking at his brother's catalog was a great idea. She helped him choose an elective for next year that will put him on track for the computer courses he wants to take in high school.

And she recommended that he start a foreign language. Now, Daniel just has to decide between Spanish and French! 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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