

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### My own business

Middle schoolers may not be old enough to hold regular jobs, but they can still earn cash and learn responsibility. Your tween might take care of pets and plants for people on vacation, wash and vacuum cars, or babysit. Suggest that he post and hand out flyers. He could also send an email advertising his services to neighbors and friends.

### Preparing for finals

If your child will take final exams this spring, she may feel pressure. To prepare, encourage her to rely on good year-round habits like paying attention in class and reviewing notes daily. Then, let her know you'll be proud of her, no matter what, for doing her best.

### Trips with blended families

Do your summer plans include vacationing with your children and stepchildren? Planning ahead can make it more enjoyable. Ask everyone what they want to do, and try to include at least one idea from each person. Also, tell the kids what you and your spouse expect, such as doing certain activities as a whole family.

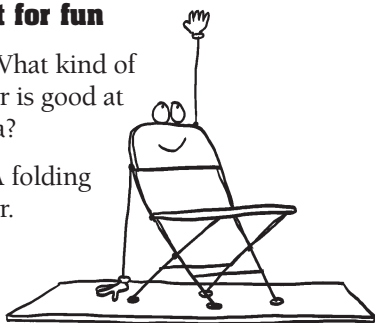
### Worth quoting

"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience." *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What kind of chair is good at yoga?

**A:** A folding chair.



## Have a creative summer

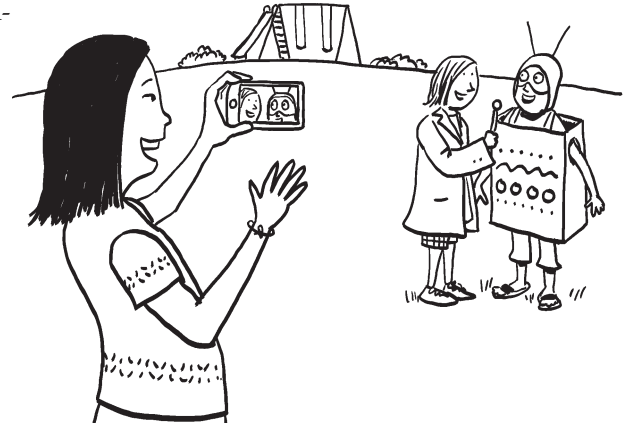
Summertime may be downtime—but try to make it “uptime” as far as your child’s brain is concerned! She can stretch her creative thinking with fun ideas like these.

### Make a book trailer

Encourage your tween to select a book to read with a friend and then film a trailer to “promote” it. They could give a sneak peek of the plot, read a few excerpts, and pose a question that would make the viewer want to read the book. (“What will happen when Earthlings finally meet Martians?”) They might even paint scenery to hang behind them or film their trailer in a place like the book’s setting (a park, outside a museum).

### Find new uses

Coming up with unusual ways to use unneeded household items will get your child’s creative juices flowing. She could cut colorful plastic shopping bags into strips and weave them into friendship bracelets. Or she might remove the



broken strap from a small purse and put toiletries inside for traveling. What other ideas can she dream up for repurposing stuff you can’t use?

### Imagine scenarios

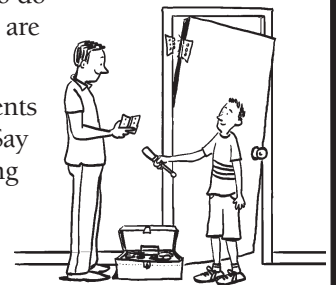
Try this thinking game. Have family members ask silly questions like “What if soccer balls were square?” or “What if fish could talk?” Write each one on an index card, and keep the cards in a zipper bag. In the car or at dinner, pull one out to start a thought-provoking discussion. Add cards with new questions to keep the conversations coming! 👍

## Encourage integrity

A sense of integrity can guide your middle grader to do the right thing and show others he’s trustworthy. Here are ways to instill honesty in your tween.

■ **Little things count.** How he handles minor incidents can determine how he deals with more serious ones. Say he breaks a door hinge and lies about it to avoid getting into trouble. Explain that lying can become a dangerous habit—and then have him help you fix the door.

■ **Think it through.** If your child is tempted to be dishonest, he could ask himself, “Would that move me closer to the person I want to be?” Also, if it’s not a choice he would want others to know about (say, texting himself test answers), it’s probably not a smart move. 👍



# Musically minded

Most tweens enjoy music, and that's good news. Why? In addition to bringing pleasure, music can build academic skills. Share these tips:

■ Suggest that your child listen for metaphors and similes in songs. These poetry techniques compare two unlike things ("Life is like a gently rolling sea"). Focusing on them will help him understand these images when he reads and use metaphors and similes in his own writing.



■ It might be fun for your tween to listen to music from periods he's studying in school, like the Roaring Twenties or the civil rights era. Have him type the name of the time period into an Internet radio station. As he listens, he can think about how the lyrics and the musical styles reflect the mood of the time.

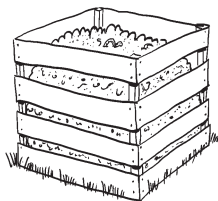
■ Encourage your middle grader to listen to music online from other countries like Chile or Japan. He'll hear styles that are popular elsewhere, such as "electropop" or "bubblegum pop." If he's studying a foreign language, he could listen to songs from that country to recognize words he knows and learn new ones. 👍

# Lessons from the environment

Your child can learn about science and help protect the environment at the same time. Suggest these activities.

**Join in a watershed cleanup.** As she picks up cans, bags, and tires that could otherwise end up in local bodies of water, your middle grader will realize how our actions affect the environment. *Note:* Let her visit [water.epa.gov/action/adopt](http://water.epa.gov/action/adopt) or contact environmental groups to find a cleanup event.

**Start a compost pile.** Does your youngster know your family's food scraps can be turned into mulch that's full of nutrients? Have her look online or in library books for advice on choosing a container and managing the heap. Then, she could help you save eggshells, coffee grounds, fruit and vegetable peels, and other scraps (not meat, dairy products, and fats—the smell can attract animals). While composting, she'll learn about reducing waste and making soil healthy. 👍

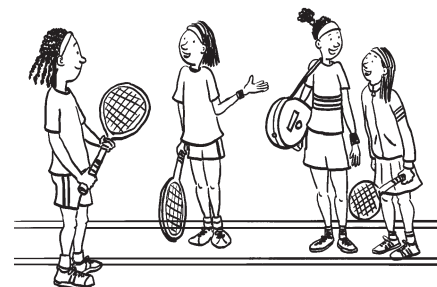


## Q & A

### Friendly faces this fall

**Q** My daughter is going to high school next year. Her "BFF" moved, and she's worried about making friends. How can I help her?

**A** To start with, encourage her to hang out with other kids she knows so she develops closer ties to more people. She might get together with a girl she sat near in Spanish or her lab partner from science. She could invite them over or suggest going to the mall or a rec center.



Another idea: Your daughter can sign up for a high school activity that starts during summer break. Then when school starts, she'll see familiar faces and have something in common to talk about. For instance, she might join a student improv group or a freshman planning committee or try out for the tennis or field hockey team. Have her check the high school's office or website for information. 👍

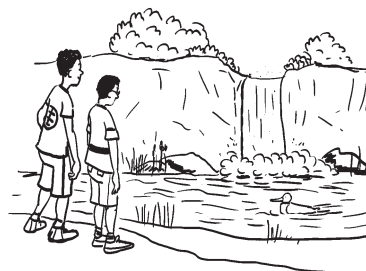
## Parent to Parent Pretend tourists

We live about an hour from a big city, but we hardly ever go there. So when my sister's family visited for spring break, I put my son Evan in charge of picking places to take them.

Evan enjoyed finding things for us to do, and he didn't even realize he was practicing research skills. He looked online, checked newspapers, and got a guidebook from the library.

We couldn't believe it—he discovered a glass-blowing museum, a park with waterfalls tucked away where you'd least expect them, and even discount tickets to a comic book convention.

In the process, we all realized just how much our area has to offer. Now when we're looking for something to do together, our son can usually suggest an idea. And if he can't, he knows how to find one! 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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