

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Meet the teachers

Touching base with your child's teachers at the beginning of the year helps establish a relationship that makes it easier to communicate later. Attend a back-to-school night or parent orientation session. If you can't make it, send emails or notes to introduce yourself and share a little about your middle grader.

### Last word

Does your tween insist on having the last word during disagreements? If so, try working on her conflict resolution skills. The next time there's an argument, suggest compromising—and letting it go. ("Both of us should've remembered to return the movie. Let's put a reminder on the door next time.")

### Family time—on foot

When your child is going somewhere within walking distance, consider joining him for a walk instead of driving him. You might head to the library or to the store for project supplies. You'll both get some exercise and a chance to catch up.

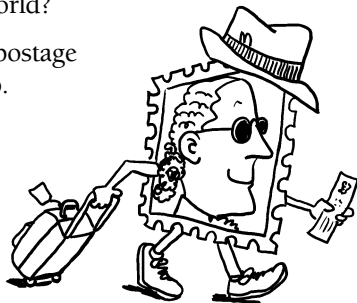
### Worth quoting

"Kindness is always fashionable."  
*Amelia Edith Barr*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What stays in the corner but travels the world?

**A:** A postage stamp.



## A+ organizing

What's one of the biggest differences between elementary school and middle school? A greater need for organization! With multiple courses and more homework, your tween can benefit from strategies like these to keep her stuff straight.

### Locker

An organized locker will help your tween quickly grab what she needs. It's a good idea to place textbooks in the order of her classes on a shelf with the spines showing. A shoebox could store extra supplies like pens, erasers, and calculator batteries. Periodically, she should clear out clutter and take home items she isn't using.

### Homework area

Whether your middle grader works at a desk or the kitchen table, keeping supplies handy will make study time more efficient. Perhaps she'll arrange them in a shower caddy or in clear jars. Also, have



her develop a system for storing old tests and assignments. She might cover empty cereal boxes with construction paper and label one for each subject.

### Backpack

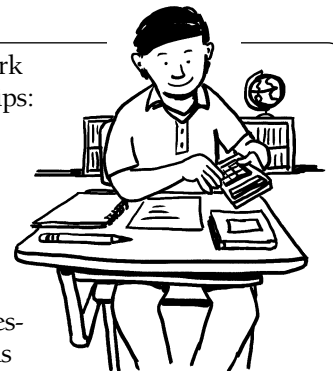
Busy students tend to dump everything into their backpacks and leave it there. Suggest that your child clean out her bag after school every Friday. Soon it'll become a habit, and she'll be ready for a fresh start each Monday. 👍

## All set for class

Being ready before class starts lays the groundwork for your child to do his best in school. Share these tips:

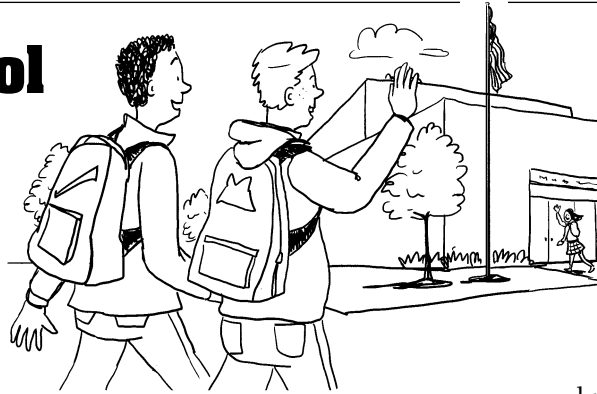
- Suggest that he get out books, notebooks, and supplies when he takes his seat. Preparing to pay attention right away will help him focus and catch important information announced when class begins.
- If he has time before the bell rings, he might skim yesterday's notes or textbook chapter. Doing so can jog his memory and help him participate in class discussions.

After he does homework each night, he could peek ahead to the next day's lesson. That way, he'll be prepared for what the teacher will be presenting. 👍



# It's a middle school social life

Feeling accepted is important for middle graders. But your tween's classes might be filled with students he's never met, and old friends may have moved away or made new friends. Here is advice that can make it easier to navigate the changing social scene.



**Be approachable.** Tell your child to think of everyone he meets as a potential friend. By smiling and saying hi in the halls or cafeteria, he could strike up conversations with people he may want to spend more time with.

**Make (and keep) plans.** Suggest that your youngster take a chance and invite new friends over for pizza and a movie on a

weekend, for instance. It's best to plan ahead—if he waits until Friday afternoon to ask, they might already have plans. *Tip:* Encourage him to stick to his plans (even if something better comes up) so people know he's reliable.

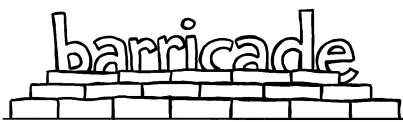
**Think of conversation starters.** Help your tween come up with topics to talk about so he won't feel tongue-tied. Staying up-to-date on music or sports can give him things to discuss that other kids are likely to be interested in. Also, include him in adult conversations so he'll hear potential topics. 👍



## Q & A Word wise

**Q** I've heard that a good vocabulary makes students better readers and writers. How can my daughter increase hers?

**A** You're right—a bigger vocabulary lets your middle grader understand more of what she reads and gives her new words to choose from when she speaks and writes.



Encourage her to use words she learns in school on a regular basis. Make it into a game by having her track how many times she says a new science term for a week—and then she can try to beat her "score" by using a social studies term the next week.

When she studies, she might have fun illustrating new words (say, a brick wall for a *barricade*). Or she could list related words, such as *police* and *cautious* for *vigilant*. Hanging the pictures or lists over her desk can make the words become familiar—and a part of her vocabulary. 👍

## Jazzed about learning

Help your child find fresh ways to get motivated for a new school year. Try these three suggestions.

1. Talk about how classes will help her outside of school. For example, an economics unit could help her manage money. Or if she's learning Spanish, she'll be able to talk to neighbors or storekeepers who speak Spanish.
2. Enthusiasm is contagious, so show excitement about what your tween is studying. Ask about math topics she's working on, or let her describe a new form of poetry that she read.
3. Point out connections to current events and the latest technology. You might show her an article about the Mars rover if she's studying the solar system or suggest that she look for a drawing app if she's taking art. 👍



## Parent to Parent Cyber "health"

I was surprised when I took my son Sam for a checkup and our pediatrician brought up cyber safety. My friends all seem to have different rules for their kids about computers and phones, so I was interested in hearing the doctor's thoughts. He said he is in favor of keeping laptops in the family room or kitchen where parents can supervise children online, and he thinks it's a good idea to set up parental controls on kids' phones.

At home, I brought up the issue again with Sam. I told him that he isn't allowed to share personal

information or chat with strangers online. And I explained that because it's my job to make sure he's safe, I need to be around when he uses the computer. He doesn't have a phone yet, but when he gets one, I'm going to look into the safety features that are available.

It was good to hear this information from someone we trust. Now even though his friends might not have the same rules as he does, at least my son got to hear the doctor's professional opinion. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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