

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Language lessons

Is your child learning a foreign language this year?

Plan a special dinner with foods from the country he's studying. *Example:* Eat gazpacho and paella if he's learning Spanish. Have him teach you words and phrases for passing food and saying "please" and "thank you." Consider doing this each quarter—he'll be proud to show you his progress.

A good sport

Explain to your tween that by showing good sportsmanship, she will represent herself—and her school—in a good light. When she's in the stands, encourage her to respect players, coaches, and referees. For instance, instead of booing to disagree with a call, she might cheer, "The next goal is yours!"

It's private

As middle graders get older, they become more private. Try not to take it personally—it's natural for your child to want some time alone. In fact, increased privacy often signals growing maturity. Honor your tween's privacy by knocking before entering his room. If he shares a room, help him find places or times he can have privacy.

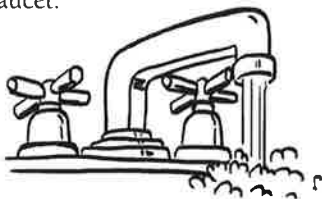
Worth quoting

"Nothing can dim the light which shines from within." *Maya Angelou*

Just for fun

Q: What runs but can't walk?

A: A faucet.



Homework problems—solved

Homework is part of your middle grader's daily routine, but stressing about it doesn't have to be. Try these ideas to handle common dilemmas.

Problem: Your child puts off homework until the last minute.

Solution: One reason students procrastinate is that they feel overwhelmed. Suggest that your tween decide in what order to do her work so she knows where to start and what to do next. Also, encourage her to put steps in her planner for big tests or long-term assignments. That way, she can tackle them one at a time. *Example:* "Review notes, make a study guide, quiz myself for a test."

Problem: She rushes to finish homework.

Solution: Requiring a set amount of daily study time may keep your child from hurrying through math to watch TV or meet her friends. Ask teachers how much time she should spend on homework each day (typically 60–90 minutes in the middle grades). Let your youngster know her work isn't done until she double-checks it and corrects



mistakes. With leftover homework time, she might read, do extra-credit assignments, or work ahead on projects.

Problem: She gets frustrated when she's stuck.

Solution: Have your middle grader make a list of resources to turn to if she's stumped. She could list phone numbers of classmates or older students, along with information for homework hotlines or websites. Suggest that she check the public library or community center to see if they offer homework help. If she's still having trouble, she can ask her teacher the next day. 👍

Nice save!

When your child earns or receives money, he may be tempted to spend it all. Teaching him to save will start a valuable habit. Consider these tips.

■ **Make it automatic.** Discuss what percentage of money he should set aside. Have him put that amount in a savings account when he gets money for odd jobs, allowance, or gifts. Explain that this will help him save for big purchases like a new bike.

■ **Stick to the plan.** If he's thinking about dipping into his savings, he can ask himself whether he would rather have a new video game now or a bike later. To stay motivated, he might hang a picture of the bike he wants and imagine himself riding it.

■ **Stretch what's left.** Your child's spending money will go further if he looks for ways to do things for less. He could borrow a book from the library instead of buying one, for example. 👍



Dealing with cyberbullying

The digital world has opened up a whole new realm for bullying. Help your middle grader stay safe with this advice.



1. Explain that what may seem like common online behavior can be cyberbullying. If friends post or share embarrassing photos or videos of others, classmates spread rumors on cell phones, or peers send hurtful messages via social media, that's crossing a line. If done purposely and repeatedly, it's considered cyberbullying.

2. Point out that what happens online may have serious, real-life consequences. A humiliating photo gone viral could cause the victim to stay away from friends or hurt himself. And the bully can get into trouble at home, at school, or even with the law.

3. Go over rules. Your middle grader should avoid doing or saying anything online that he wouldn't do or say in person. Encourage him to think about how someone might feel before he texts or posts.

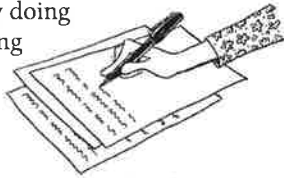
4. Tell your tween not to respond to a bully. It may make the situation worse. Have him save, print, or take a screen shot of the post to keep a record of what happened. Then, he should block the sender and tell you what happened so you can decide what to do, such as notifying your Internet service provider or the school. 👍

Q & A

Writing for pleasure

Q My daughter used to enjoy writing, but now she sees writing assignments as a chore. How can I help her find the joy in it again?

A Your child might rediscover her enjoyment by doing creative writing activities that don't have grades attached.



For example, suggest that she write and decorate an inspiring poem to put inside her locker. Or she could make up funny captions for photos and share them with family.

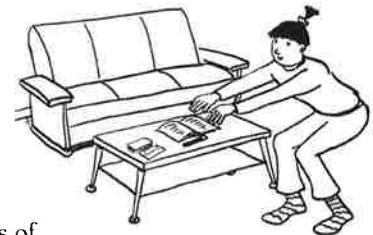
She can even write with friends by having a paper "snowball fight." One person writes an opening sentence of a story on a piece of paper, crumples it, and tosses it to another player. That person adds a sentence, re-crumple the paper, and tosses it again. Keep writing, crumpling, and tossing until the page is full. Then, read the story aloud.

Writing for fun may take the pressure off and unleash her imagination. And that can help her loosen up and enjoy written assignments in school more. 👍



Fit in fitness

With school in full swing, your child probably has many demands on her time, and she may not be thinking about staying fit. Here are easy ways to add activity into her day.



Start a 60/30 challenge. Doing 60 minutes of activity a day for 30 days might kick-start a fitness habit. The hour can be spread throughout the day (30-minute dance class + 10-minute walk to a friend's house + 20-minute bike ride after dinner). Have her record her totals.

Make a "random activities" pile. Your tween could brainstorm exercises to do for 1–2 minutes, such as squats, push-ups, or sit-ups. She can write them on index cards and leave the cards by her desk and the TV. During homework breaks and commercials, she should draw one and do what it says. She might note on the back how many she completed and try for more next time. 👍

Parent to Parent

Work your way to success

My son Blake was surprised and disappointed when he auditioned for seventh-grade band and wasn't placed in the highest level. Until then, he had done well at whatever he tried. He wasn't prepared to handle it when something didn't come easily.

I explained that it was okay to struggle—and in fact, it was a normal part of life. I shared stories of times I've had to work to get better. In my first job, I

told him, I messed up a few customers' orders, so the manager had to review the steps with me for a week.

I encouraged Blake to see his trumpet playing as a work in progress. He brainstormed ways he could improve a little at a time.

Then, he taped a note to his music stand that says, "Aim for progress, not perfection." He has been practicing extra each day, working on the parts that give him trouble—and on his perseverance. 👍



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