

January 2017

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Attendance counts

The better your middle schooler's attendance, the better chance that he will succeed academically. Remind him that he's expected in school every day unless he is sick or there is a family emergency. If your child asks to stay home for other reasons, explore why, and discuss solutions. If he says he's too tired, for example, work out how he could get more sleep.

### Say no to sexting

Warn your tween about the dangers of sending or forwarding sexually suggestive pictures or messages from a cell phone or computer. Sexting is illegal among minors and can ruin a middle grader's reputation. Make sure your child realizes that once an image is sent, it's out there for everyone to see—forever.

### Awesome electives

Encourage your middle schooler to use next year's electives to add variety to her core classes. Some may let her explore possible career paths, such as robotics or forensic science. Others might tap into a special interest like filmmaking or music. Suggest she make choices that challenge but don't overwhelm her.

### Worth quoting

"There is no friend as loyal as a book."  
*Ernest Hemingway*

### Just for fun

**Q:** How many seconds are there in a year?

**A:** There are 12!  
January 2nd,  
February 2nd,  
March 2nd...



## Project success

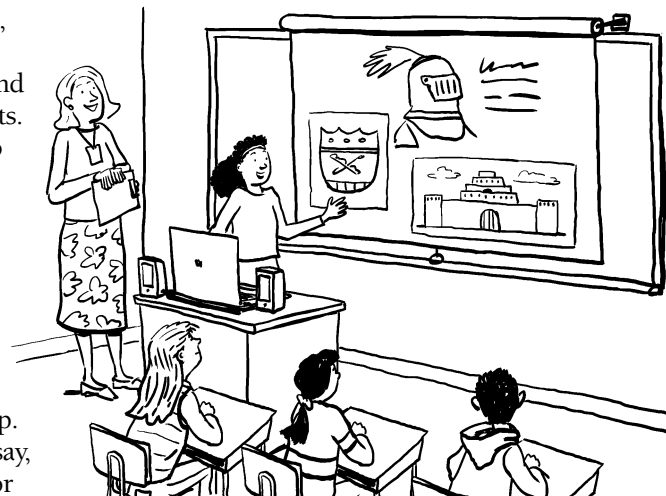
In the middle grades, your tween will have to think about, develop, and present in-depth projects. Share these strategies to help her successfully manage them.

### Set targets

To stay on track with a project deadline, suggest that your child set mini targets for completing each step. If she hits roadblocks (say, the computer is down or she runs out of art supplies), have her turn to another portion and keep going. She can get back to the other part later—and her progress won't be stalled.

### Research carefully

Encourage your youngster to stay focused as she's researching. Say she's writing about medieval Europe. She may find great sources about continents during that era, but she should weed them out if they don't apply. *Tip:* As she's conducting research, recommend that she



list her sources so her bibliography will be done.

### Plan the presentation

How does your middle grader want to present her project? Will she write a skit, create a photo collage, or use audio or video clips? When she finishes, let her practice with you to get ready for her in-school presentation. Then, ask how she thinks it turned out. Being satisfied with her work will get your tween in the habit of doing her best. 👍

## To tell you the truth...

Being honest will help your middle grader earn trust from family, friends, teachers, and coaches. Foster truthfulness with these ideas:

- Explain that he's better off telling the truth. If he admits taking money from your wallet without asking, you might have him do odd jobs to pay it back. But if he denies it and you find out he did, he will have lost your trust—and he should know it will take time for him to regain it.
- When you're aware he's done something he's not being truthful about, state the facts. For example, tell him you saw him at one place when he was supposed to be at another. Allow him to tell you what happened, then enforce appropriate consequences (say, being grounded for a weekend). 👍



# How to “help” with homework

When your middle schooler does homework, you can play a supporting role—but let him take charge. Here’s how.

**Be available.** As your tween works, he may need an “assistant” to listen to ideas, proofread a paper, make sure he understands directions, or quiz him for a test. Talk about who else he could turn to if you’re not available, perhaps a sibling or a grandparent.



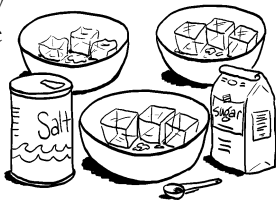
**Check in.** Ask what he’s working on and how it’s coming along. If he is ready for a break, suggest an energy-boosting snack like apples and cheese, or hummus and cucumber slices. Or you could take a brisk walk around the block together to help him refocus.

**Provide guidance.** Encourage your child to find ways to get more information when needed. He might call a classmate for an explanation of an assignment or a homework hotline about a math concept. He could also review his textbook and class notes. Have him consider what he’s tried already—and what he might try next. Working through frustrations will help your tween build problem-solving skills. 👍

## Icy science

Why do we put salt on icy sidewalks? Your child can find out with this “chilly” experiment. Have her follow these steps.

1. Get three bowls, and put three same-size ice cubes in each (with the cubes touching).
2. Quickly sprinkle  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt on one set of cubes,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. sugar on another, and nothing on the third. Refrigerate.
3. Check every 30 minutes until one set is about halfway melted. Remove the bowls.
4. Separately pour the water from each bowl into a measuring cup, and record the amounts.
5. Let the remaining cubes melt completely. Measure and record the amount of water in each bowl.
6. Now determine the percentage of ice that melted initially: For each bowl, divide the amount that melted at first by its total amount of melted water.



## Q & A

### Shift the responsibility

**Q** My daughter says I’m always “on her case,” reminding her to practice her clarinet, take a shower, or pick up her shoes. I don’t want her to feel like all I ever do is correct her. Help!

**A** It may feel natural to give your daughter reminders. But try making her responsible for reminding herself. Suggest she create a daily checklist that includes big jobs (practicing her instrument) and smaller ones (putting shoes away). Or she could list her to-do tasks in a daily planner to keep herself organized.

Giving her positive—and specific—feedback will also help. Rather than saying, “You’re so talented!” if she practices without a reminder, you might say, “I heard you practicing that tough part in your new clarinet solo. I know your hard work will pay off at your spring band concert.” 👍



## Parent to Parent

### Finding new friends

My son Justin had a core group of friends in elementary school. But when he started middle school this year, they grew apart. I noticed he was spending weekends alone, not hanging out with buddies. My heart broke for him because he felt like he didn’t fit in.

A friend told me she knew plenty of other kids who had to make new friends

at this age. She mentioned that her own son met his best friend when he started playing soccer in middle school. She suggested Justin might have the same experience if he tried an activity or a school club.

I shared her idea with Justin, and he decided to join the environmental club. He’s still getting to know the other members, but he seems glad to have a group to belong to—and some potential new friends. 👍



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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