

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Pre-exam cleanup

Your youngster has probably accumulated a lot of papers this year. Rather than waiting until the last minute, suggest that he start cleaning out his homework area, locker, and backpack now so he's ready to study for exams. He'll probably find old tests and other assignments that can help him review.

### Showing appreciation

Encourage your tween to make cards thanking her teachers for a great year. A simple message lets them know they're appreciated ("Thanks for helping me understand algebra"). *Idea:* To decorate the card, she could include a favorite poem for her English teacher or a picture of a historic site for her history teacher.

### Write letters

Does your middle grader think your city should have better bike paths or more activities for tweens? Let him write letters to the editor or to government officials. He can practice persuasive writing by making a point and backing it up with facts. Remind him to edit his letters for spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

### Worth quoting

"Curiosity is the wick in the candle of learning." *William A. Ward*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What animal never needs a haircut?

**A:** A bald eagle!



## Sunny with a chance of learning

Don't let your child slip down the "summer slide"! That's when kids forget what they've learned in school over the long summer break. Consider these ideas to help your middle schooler hold onto—and even expand—her skills and knowledge.

**Be creative.** Have your tween use technology to capture summer activities like family vacations, relatives' visits, and holidays. She could make a "glog" (a virtual collage) at [edu.glogster.com](http://edu.glogster.com) or an online slideshow at [smilebox.com](http://smilebox.com). Then, let her share her creation with the whole family.

**Practice math.** Encourage your middle grader to "play" the stock market. Using \$1,000 in pretend money, she can invest in companies that make her favorite products like jeans and cell phones. Have her follow the stocks online or in newspapers and calculate her gains and losses. She



might also try a free online trading game like [weseed.com](http://weseed.com). *Idea:* Hold a family competition to see who can make the biggest profit.

**Listen to books.** Let your child pick out audio books at the library. Then, listen to them together in the car while you run errands or take trips. She can predict what will happen next and draw conclusions about the characters, which can improve her reading comprehension. 👍

## Safe and supervised

Your middle grader may be too old for day care but too young to be home alone all day this summer. Try these two strategies.

**1.** Check camps, places of worship, community centers, and libraries to see if they let tweens help with younger children's programs. Look for those within safe walking or biking distance of your house—he'll get healthy exercise as he goes there and back.

**2.** If you work part-time, arrange a swap with another parent. The kids can be at your house some days each week and at her house the other days. Or consider asking your employer if you can telecommute one or two days a week during the summer. That way, you'll be in the house in case of emergency. 👍



# Patience for a "now" world

Today's tweens can get what they want quickly, from fast food to instant information. But patience will help your child cope with delays that are part of life. Here are some suggestions.

## Look for alternatives

Encourage your middle grader to find ways to distract himself—rather than complaining—when he has to wait for something that is important to him. Say he has an injury that



keeps him from playing baseball. He might use the time for something else he enjoys (building rockets, organizing baseball cards). Or he could ask to be scorekeeper for his team so he can still hang out with his friends.

## Think about decisions

Explain to your child that he can make better choices by taking time to think them through. You might share a quick decision you regretted, like agreeing to host a party the same week you had a deadline at work. When he faces a dilemma, suggest that he wait a few days so he can weigh the pros and cons and reach the best result. 👍



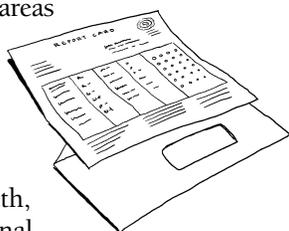
# Q & A How to review report cards

**Q** Report card time is stressful for both my daughter and me. How can I handle it better?

**A** First, look for positive parts of her report card, like an improved grade or a nice comment from a teacher. Your middle grader needs to know what she's doing well, and it will help both of you put the overall report in perspective.

Second, in areas that are disappointing, talk about what happened. If she gets a C in math, leaf through final papers, including homework, projects, and tests, to look for patterns. Remind her about careless mistakes, like not checking math computations or skipping test questions.

Finally, look ahead. Some teachers may check email the week after school is out, so she could ask for suggestions that might help her in the fall. 👍



# Enjoying summer reading

Your child may not venture into the rain forest or befriend mythical creatures—but she can enjoy these kinds of adventures through books! Use the following tips to encourage her to read this summer:

- Have her sign up for the library's summer reading program. *Hint:* Suggest that she check out or reserve books as soon as possible, since popular titles go fast.
- Recommend that she take her reading to new places. She might read at a park, by a stream, or at a bookstore. A fun idea is to match a book to a location—if you're visiting a different state, she could find a novel that's set there.
- Hold a summer movie festival where each week you watch a movie based on a book. Your child can choose the movies and read the books first. Let her tell you how the movie and book differ—and which one she liked better. 👍



# Parent to Parent Not such a chore

After years of battles, I finally found a way to make chore time easier for my son, Sean.

When he complained that he was tired of doing the same task over and over, I looked on Pinterest for ideas. I decided to make a chore box and put household jobs on separate index cards inside. He picks one each day so that his chores vary. He might empty trash cans

one day and organize shoes in the foyer the next.

I also came up with a helpful discovery by chance. As we were doing the dinner dishes the other night, I turned on music, and I noticed the job seemed to go faster. Now when we're working around the house, I'll ask Sean to pick a CD, and off we go.

These ideas haven't made Sean look forward to doing chores—but they have made him more willing! 👍



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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