

October 2019

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Making an entrance

Teach your child to enter a room confidently. Have him practice walking into the kitchen or living room with his back straight and head high, then greeting you while looking you in the eye. He'll make a good impression on others and feel more self-confident.

### Count on counselors

Remind your middle grader that her school counselor is there to help her in all kinds of ways. She might ask the counselor about opportunities that match her interests, such as an engineering competition or a writing workshop. Her counselor can also listen if your tween needs help with issues like stress or relationships.

### Proofing around town

Here's an easy way to show your child why proofreading is important. Together, look for signs on highways or buildings that contain punctuation or spelling errors or confusing wording. *Examples:* "Sport's Store." "Tables for eating customers only." Who can find the funniest example—and then tell how to fix it?

### Worth quoting

"We will be known by the tracks we leave behind." *Dakotan proverb*

### Just for fun

**Q:** I have a neck but no head, and I wear a cap. What am I?

**A:** A bottle.



## Brain-friendly studying

Active study strategies like drawing, moving around, and teaching information to others help to cement material in your tween's brain. They also make studying more fun! Share these techniques.

### Make a meme

Encourage your middle grader to create memes inspired by topics she's studying. For Newton's laws of motion, she could draw herself as a soccer goalie blocking a shot. This shows that an object in motion (the ball) stops when a force (the goalie) acts upon it. Her caption? "Thanks for the win, Newton!"

### Get moving

Combine fitness with studying. Have your tween list six movements, such as lunges, burpees, and toe touches, and number them 1–6. As she finishes studying each page or section, she can roll a die and review out loud while doing the matching exercises (describe the three branches of government as she does three lunges).

## A successful juggling act

Middle graders juggle classes, responsibilities at home, and activities. Help your tween keep all those balls in the air with this system.

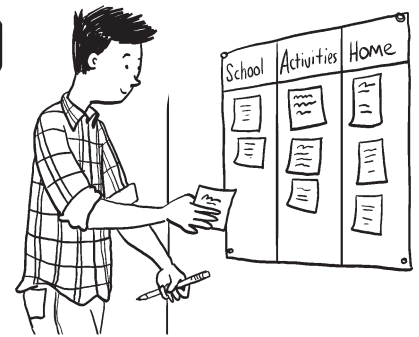
**Sort tasks.** Each week, have your child create a three-column chart for School, Activities, and Home. Then, he could list obligations: "French essay due Thursday" under School, "Get supplies for cross-country car wash Saturday" under Activities, and "Do laundry" under Home.

**Use time wisely.** Your tween can choose tasks to match his pockets of time. For instance, if you say you'll take him to buy car-wash supplies in 10 minutes, he might sort his laundry in that small time slot. Then, maybe he'll start on his essay when he gets home and has an hour before dinner. 👍



### Record a podcast

If your child can teach a concept to someone else, that means she really understands it. Suggest that she record a podcast explaining an algebraic formula and share it with a classmate, for example. *Idea:* She and her friends might make a group podcast interviewing each other about a historical event or science lab. 👍

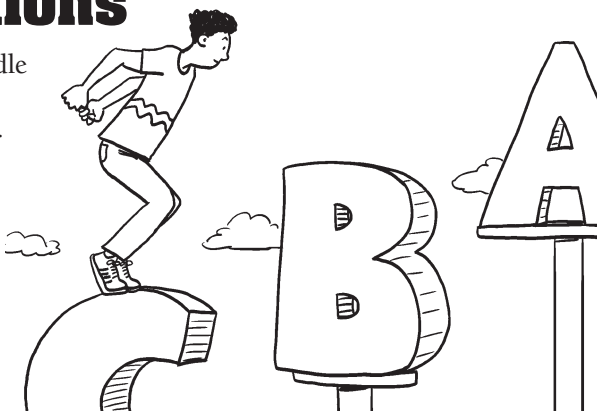


# Effective expectations

Setting a high achievement bar for your middle schooler will inspire him to leap high. Follow these steps to put realistic expectations in place.

**1. Decide what's doable.** Perhaps your child got a C in English last year. Rather than expecting him to earn an A this year, tell him you expect him to bring up his grade.

**2. Focus on what matters.** Keep communication clear by saying exactly what you mean. If your middle grader wants to quit the debate team, you might say, "I expect you to stick to your commitments" rather than "You have to do debate." That means he'll need to finish the competition



then make a plan to raise it. Or he could plan to spend extra time practicing for his next debate. 👍

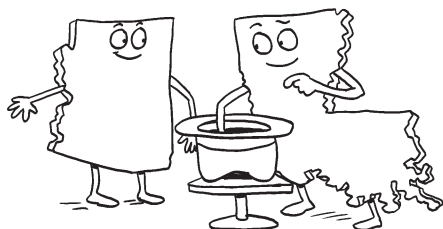
season, but he can switch activities next semester if he still feels the same way.

**3. Handle setbacks.** Part of meeting expectations involves making adjustments. Let your tween know not to be discouraged by one low grade or one challenging debate. Have him ask his teacher how a low score will affect his average,

## Are we there yet?

Arizona, Missouri, Louisiana... does your child know where each state is located? Help her explore geography by playing this game.

**Materials:** large U.S. map, paper, pencil, scissors, hat, game tokens, die



Ask your middle grader to list all the states' names on a sheet of paper (she can refer to the map) and cut them apart to make 50 slips. Put the slips in a hat, and let each family member pick one.

Place the U.S. map on the floor, and have each person put a token on the state you live in. Then, take turns rolling a die and moving that number of states—with the goal of reaching the state she drew. The first player to land on her state wins. 👍



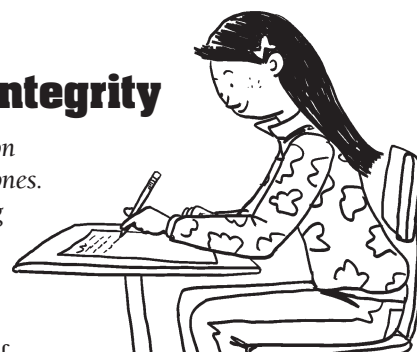
## The importance of integrity

**Q** I've heard that some students cheat on tests by looking up answers on their phones. How can I keep my daughter from doing something like this?

**A** Tweens may not consider "e-cheating" to be as serious as copying from a classmate's paper. Explain to your daughter that any type of cheating is wrong and that you consider honesty more important than high grades.

Role-play what to say if a classmate asks her to cheat, perhaps by texting answers. For instance, she could say, "I like to do my own thing" or simply "No thanks." She'll feel good about doing what's right.

Also, remind her to obey school rules for technology use like leaving her phone at home or in her locker. This will help her avoid the temptation to cheat and make it easier to resist pressure from others. 👍



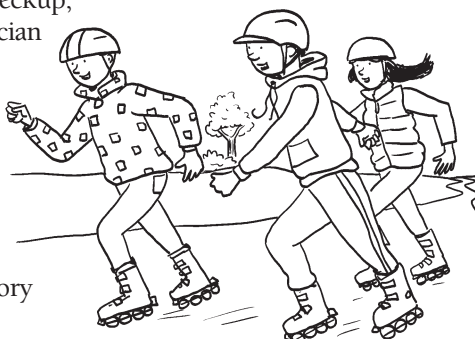
## On the move

When my son Rory was younger, he'd spend hours playing outside with his friends. Now that he's older, he and his buddies would rather play video games.

At his annual checkup, I asked the pediatrician how much exercise Rory needs. The doctor said children—and adults—should be active at least an hour a day. He suggested that when Rory has a friend over, I

encourage them to do something active. And he recommended that we stay active as a family, maybe by going for walks or bike rides.

Rory must have been paying attention to the doctor, because he recently invited some friends to go Rollerblading. And this Sunday after dinner, we're going to ride our bikes around the neighborhood. I'm looking forward to being more active, too! 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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