

# Middle Years

## *Working Together for School Success*

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### **Short Stops**

- **Start a “Just Ours” Tradition** – Stepsiblings might bring different traditions to a blended family. While it’s important to keep those, creating shared rituals can be a nice way to bond. Maybe you’ll have pajamas-and-pizza on Wednesday night or Saturday afternoon tennis. *Idea:* Start a last-day-of-school tradition to wrap up the year.
- **A Letter to Myself** - As your tween finishes this school year, ask her to imagine she’s starting it all over again. What advice would she give her past self? What’s she proud of, and what does she wish she’d done differently? You could suggest she writes a letter to herself about what she’s learned. She can use her insights when she faces obstacles in the future.

### **Keep Learning All Summer**

What does your tween get when she combines Reading, Writing, and Math with summer vacation? A ticket to a successful upcoming school year! Here’s how she can retain what she learned this year—and learn even more.

#### ➤ **Issue Reading Challenges**

Have your child put together a summer reading adventure with cool challenges to check off. Examples might include reading under the stars, reading to a pet, checking out a book from a section of the library she has never visited, or reading books set on each continent. Add Math: *Assign a point value to each challenge (include fractions) and have her keep a running total.*

#### ➤ **Get Inspired to Write**

Books can be jumping-off points for creative writing projects. Your middle grader might turn a novel into a picture book for a younger sibling. Or, she could create a comic strip or a board game based on a book. Add Math: Encourage her to write “\$2 book summaries” (pronouns = 5 cents, nouns = 8 cents, verbs = 10 cents, adjectives = 13 cents, adverbs = 15 cents). Can she sum up a book in exactly \$2 worth of words?

#### ➤ **Pitch a Tent**

Let your tween set up a tent in the yard or basement. She can stock it with books, magazines, paper, pencils and other writing tools, pillows, and healthy snacks. Add Math: *Fill the tent with Math-related novels, nonfiction books, and puzzle books (ask a librarian for ideas).*

### **“You Can Count On Me!”**

When your tween makes a commitment and keeps it, people learn they can depend on him. Help him be more reliable with these tips.

- **Be Sure It’s Possible** – Before your child agrees to something, like helping a friend rehearse for a play, he should think realistically about whether he can follow through. If he’s not sure, it’s better to say no than to let his friend down.

## You Can Count on Me, continued

- **Make Commitments a Priority** – Promises take priority over opportunities that crop up later. If your teen said he'd wash your car on Saturday afternoon, then gets invited to play basketball, he'll need to finish the car before his game.

**Understanding Your Ever-Changing Tween** - The "in-between" years, when your child is no longer a little kid but not quite a teen-ager, can be challenging for you and your middle schooler. Try these strategies for navigating them.

- **Don't Take it Personally** – Your tween is going through big physical and emotional changes, and he's facing different social situations. With those changes and situations, this is a hormone-fueled recipe for unpredictable behavior. So try not to overreact if he rolls his eyes when you ask if he wants to work on a puzzle with you. Instead, just start working on the puzzle by yourself, as he may change his mind later. Tip: Let him know you're there to answer questions about changes he's going through.
- **Give Him Space** – After years of bedtime snuggles and chats, your child's closed bedroom door and whispered chats with friends can be upsetting. However, testing their independence is a natural part of growing up. Try knocking on their door and some days, they'll actually want to talk! Tip: Stand firm on rules about health and safety, but aim to give them more freedom about things like fashion and friendships.

### **Q & A: Ease Into Social Media**

**Q:** My daughter is old enough now to sign up for social media accounts. Should I let her?

**A:** Children mature at different rates, so start by thinking about your child's offline behavior. Does she follow rules you've set for her? Is she considerate of others' feelings? Ask your daughter which sites she's interested in using. Explore them together and discuss dangers like cyberbullying. Also talk about ways to avoid problems, such as using the "Would I want Grandma to see this?" rule before posting anything. If you let your tween open an account, help her adjust privacy settings and then, create rules. She might have to "friend" you, only interact with family and certain friends, and limit her time on social media. Finally, keep checking in to ask how things are going. Making social media part of your everyday conversations can encourage her to come to you for guidance.

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

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