

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 his 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?
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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.)
- **Record a Podcast** – 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 Reasonable** – 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.

Effective Expectations, continued

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.” By saying this, it means he’ll need to finish the competition 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 they should 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, then make a plan to raise it.

Q & A: The Importance of Integrity

Q: I 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.

Parent to Parent **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 needed. The doctor said children – and adults – should be active at least an hour a day. He suggested that when Rory had a friend over, he needed to do something active, and recommended that we stay active as a family 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. Also, this Sunday after dinner, we’re going to ride our bikes around the neighborhood. I’m looking forward to being more active, too.

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