

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Prepare for exams

Your tween will remember more information if he studies for finals over a longer period of time rather than cramming. Suggest that he create a study schedule and stick to it. He could also join a study group to stay on track.

### Words inspire confidence

The way your middle grader talks about herself can affect her self-esteem. If you hear her make a negative statement like "I can't do this" or "I'm just not good at this," have her turn it into a positive one. *Examples:* "I'll try" or "I'm working on it." Then, set an example by doing the same for yourself!

### A first aid kit

Ask your child to make a home first aid kit. He can fill a container with bandages, gauze, adhesive tape, and antiseptic wipes. Show him how to use the supplies so he learns what to do if he or someone else is injured. Encourage him to put the kit where family members can find it easily, perhaps in the hall closet.

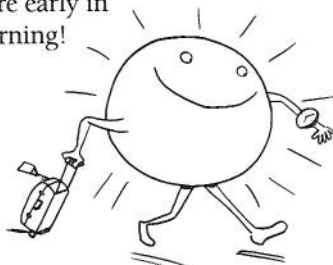
### Worth quoting

"The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity."  
*Dorothy Parker*

### Just for fun

**Teacher:** How fast does light travel?

**Student:** I don't know, but it sure gets here early in the morning!



## Keep your brain in gear

When the school year ends, the learning doesn't have to. Keep your tween's mind active all summer long with ideas like these.

### Take up a hobby

A hobby gives your child a meaningful way to spend time while she practices various skills. For example, knitting requires math and attention to detail. And chess promotes strategic thinking and patience. She could take a community center class or watch how-to videos. Then, suggest that she set a goal like knitting a scarf or beating you at chess before summer ends!



### Explore the community

Visiting new places will build your tween's general knowledge. You might tour a museum or hike in a state park, for instance. During your adventures, encourage her to ask a docent or ranger

questions or to read signs to learn about the exhibits or wildlife.

### Look ahead to fall

Your child can get a head start on a subject she'll study in school next year. For example, if she'll take Spanish, she could download a free app to begin learning greetings and other phrases. Or if she signed up for engineering, she might look online for projects to try like designing a water bottle rocket or a solar panel. 👍

## Summer routines

Setting up a routine can add structure to your child's summer on days when he's home. Try these tips.

■ **Eating.** Plan regular family meals to stay connected with your middle grader. Also, have him help you stock healthy snacks and lunches he can prepare on his own if you're not home.

■ **Sleeping.** Getting enough sleep is important for good health year-round. Set a reasonable bedtime, and have your tween get up by a set time. This is especially important toward the end of summer so he'll be ready to return to his school schedule.

■ **Chores.** Keep your child in the routine of having regular responsibilities. You might give him a list of jobs for the week (laundry, vacuuming) and let him decide which day he'll do each task. 👍





# Ways to handle peer pressure

Peer pressure can be positive when friends motivate your middle grader to read a good book or work out. But when he's pressured to do things that *aren't* good for him, he needs to be able to resist. Share these strategies.

**Listen to instincts.** If your tween is pressured to do something he knows isn't right (shoplifting, bullying), suggest that he ask himself, "Would I want my parents to know?" or "Is this safe (legal, kind)?" If the answer is no, he should listen to his instincts.



**Practice responses.** Together, brainstorm ways to say no, such as, "No thanks, I'm not into that" or "I don't want to get kicked off the swim team." Also, help your child think of ways to get out of uncomfortable or unsafe situations like being pressured to try alcohol. Agree on a phrase he will use in a call or text to you if he needs a way

out. Example: "Can you put my clothes in the dryer?" That's your cue to pick him up right away. 👍

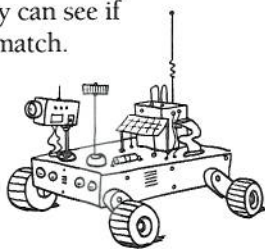


# Break into coding

Learning to code will make your child a better logical thinker and problem solver. It could even lead to a career one day. Spark her interest with these suggestions:

■ Can your tween and a friend draw identical pictures without seeing each other's papers? First, each person draws a 10-by-10 grid on her own paper. One person secretly chooses a crayon and draws a shape in any box on her grid. Then, she writes code telling the other person how to copy her drawing (starting in the bottom left-hand corner of her paper). Example: R3 U2 BT = move right three boxes, move up two, draw a blue triangle. Now it's the other person's turn to draw a shape and write code. After a few rounds, they can see if their drawings match.

■ Help your middle grader find a computer class or club at school or the public library. Maybe she'll create a mobile app or build a Lego robot. Or she might use coding to make online games at a site like [code.org](http://code.org). 👍



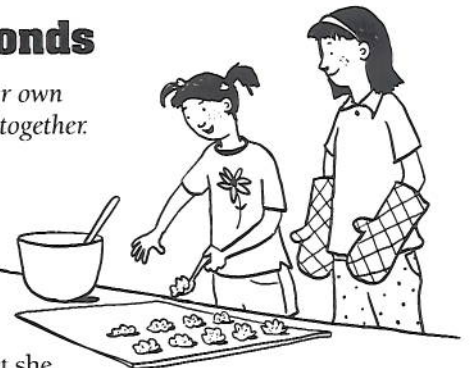
## Q & A

### Building sibling bonds

**Q** My daughters are busy with their own friends and don't spend a lot of time together. How can I help them be closer?

**A** Suggest that your girls set aside "sister time" on a regular basis. They could take turns deciding what to do. Maybe your older daughter will teach her little sister to bake. Or perhaps your younger one will show her big sister a science project she did in school. They might even find ways to combine their talents or interests—say, by doing food-related science experiments.

Encouraging your daughters to support each other will also strengthen their relationship. Say your younger one is disappointed about not getting invited to a sleep-over. Quietly suggest to your older daughter that it would mean a lot if she comforted her little sister. She might show her funny videos or write a note about why she's a great sister, for instance. 👍



## Parent to Parent

### 'Zines by tweens

My son Brian recently submitted a short story about pet adoption to a teen magazine. That gave him the idea to publish his own 'zine, which he explained is a mini print magazine. He decided to focus on animal welfare and call his 'zine *Paws and Claws*.

In each issue, he highlights an animal in need of adoption. He prints a photo and

description from our local shelter's website and pastes them into his 'zine. The 'zine also features the adventures of his rescue hedgehog. He takes pictures of Hedgie curled into a ball or snuggled up in a blanket and writes funny captions.

Now each month, Brian makes photocopies of his 'zine and mails them to friends and relatives. Sometimes he even gets "fan mail," which motivates him to keep writing. 👍



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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