

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Keep reviewing

Students sometimes stop reviewing for a test when they think they have the information down pat. Encourage your tween to keep studying even after she feels that she knows the material. It's natural to forget a certain amount, so extra studying can help her retain as much information as possible.

In the loop

If you are separated or divorced, try to have both parents attend end-of-year activities. You'll show your child that you can set aside differences to support him. Agree upon the best way to stay in touch, and share details about concerts and banquets and to arrange your middle grader's transportation.

Try, try again

Does your youngster ever feel like quitting when she struggles with something new? Suggest that she pinpoint the problem and look for ways to improve. For example, if she keeps striking out at softball and wants to quit the team, she could ask her coach for help on her stance and then practice her swing.

Worth quoting

"Sometimes you will never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory." *Theodor Seuss Geisel*

Just for fun

Jesse: "What does IDK mean?"

Mark: "I don't know."

Jesse: "No one else does, either!"



Steps to better research

Your child may think that knowing how to do Google searches makes him a good researcher. But when he works on a report for school, there's more involved than simply choosing search terms. Share these strategies for better research.

Use trustworthy websites

Government and school websites are often more reliable than pages created by private groups or individuals. Your middle grader can find these sites by typing *site:.gov* or *site:.edu* before his search term. For any site, he should look to see when it was last updated to make sure the information is current. Also, he could check out the credentials of site authors by doing an online search for their names.

Ask a librarian

Suggest that your child tell the librarian about his research topic and ask where he can find the best information. She might steer him toward a particular section of the library or show him how to



use a special database. For instance, she could direct him to an electronic index of magazine and newspaper articles or a collection of images from art museums.

Fact-check

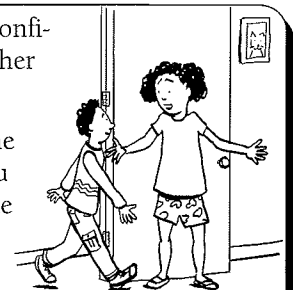
Encourage your tween to find at least three sources to verify each fact he's using for his paper. Help him see that a single sentence may contain several facts to confirm. In the statement "Most of the United States' approximately 300 million people have one of eight common blood types," among the things he'd need to double-check are the U.S. population and the number of blood types. 👍

Assert yourself

Being assertive can help your middle grader feel more confident and communicate effectively with others. Encourage her to stand up for herself with these tips:

■ **Explain.** Point out that an assertive person says what she wants firmly but politely. Then, try to find an example. You might let her listen in while you call a customer service line to resolve an issue, for instance.

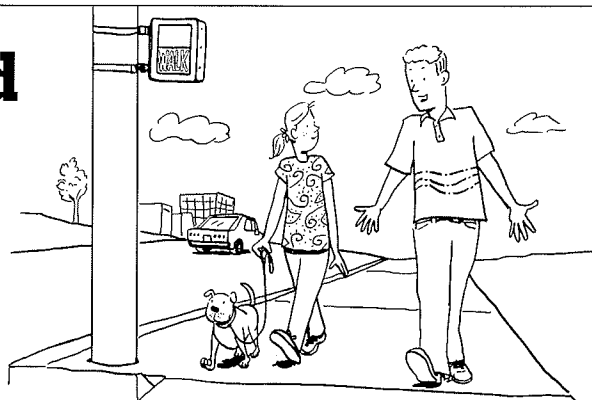
■ **Practice.** Role-playing can make her comfortable with being assertive. Ask her to imagine a situation—say, her younger brother going into her room without permission—and have her think of an assertive response. She might say, "Hi. I'd appreciate it if you would knock next time." 👍



Raising a good citizen

Before long, your tween will be old enough to get a job and drive a car. Here are ways to teach her about being a good citizen now so she will be prepared later.

Talk about laws. Your child might not realize how many laws affect her each day. Pick an aspect of daily life, such as going for a walk, and take turns naming related laws (obey walk signals, don't litter). Try to introduce new ideas—for instance, adults pay taxes so sidewalks can be maintained.



Then, discuss what would happen if people broke the laws (traffic accidents, a messy neighborhood).

Stay informed. Good citizens know what's going on in their world. Read the newspaper as a family, perhaps at the breakfast table or in the living room after dinner. Share articles that you think your tween can

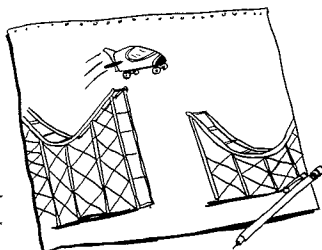
relate to. For instance, maybe the high school she'll attend is getting a new athletic complex.

Pitch in. Encourage your middle schooler to help out in the community. She can start with a cause that interests her. If she feels strongly about animal rights, she might contact your local chapter of the Humane Society or a pet rescue group to see how she could help. 👍

What engineers do

When your child visits an amusement park, writes with a mechanical pencil, or listens to an MP3 player, he's benefiting from the work of engineers. Maybe he would like to have a hand in future inventions that the world uses! Get him thinking about the possibilities of engineering with these ideas:

■ Together, brainstorm examples of fun or useful inventions that your family uses (roller coasters, ice dispensers). Then, talk about versions that your tween could picture for the future. He might imagine an amusement park ride with cars that fly above the track or a refrigerator that dispenses milk and other drinks.



■ If something breaks or doesn't work properly, suggest that your middle grader try to fix or improve it. He could find ways to keep his bicycle brakes from sticking or modify his pocket folders so they hold papers more securely. 👍



Q & A

Learn to think critically

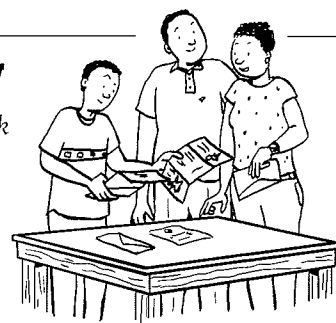
Q Recently I read that children who can think critically tend to be more motivated to learn.

What is critical thinking, and how can I help my son work on this skill?

A Critical thinking includes evaluating information and drawing conclusions. Your child can do both with activities at home.

For instance, ask him to share his reasoning for or against course requirements at school. How does he feel about having to take PE or a foreign language? Have him explain why someone else might feel differently. This will help him practice considering diverse viewpoints and looking at situations in more than one way.

Also, give him chances to make decisions based on information that he reads. Say you receive an offer in the mail to change cable providers. You could ask him to compare prices and features and tell you which one is the best deal. 👍



Parent to Parent

Middle school dating

My seventh grader, Tiffany, recently mentioned that her friend is "going out" with a boy. At first, I wasn't sure what that meant, considering they are only 12 years old.

Tiffany said they don't actually go out on dates. But they text and talk on the phone, eat lunch together in the cafeteria, and sometimes go to each other's houses for family dinners.

I took the opportunity to share my feelings about middle

school dating. I told Tiffany I was happy that her friend's parents had met the boy. I also said I'm glad they're supervised when they spend time together—I don't believe kids should go out on actual dates until they are older.

Then, I explained that I'm always here if Tiffany has questions about relationships or about growing up. I don't think she's interested in dating yet, but sharing her friend's experience has opened the door for future conversations. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

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