

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success

## Short Stops



### Stay focused online

As your child does Internet research, she may end up on sites that aren't related to her search—and forget what she was looking for in the first place! She can prevent this by opening every link in a new tab so she can easily return to the original search page.

### What's in my future?

It's never too early to help your tween imagine what his future will hold. Suggest that he talk to friends' older siblings to learn about their colleges, trade schools, jobs, or military careers. If there's a college nearby, you might walk around campus together or attend a basketball game to give him a glimpse of college life.

### Lead the way

Middle graders can be passionate about causes. Encourage yours to pick an issue she cares about, like animal rights or diabetes research. Then, she could look for ways to help. For example, she might volunteer at an animal adoption fair or write a letter to the newspaper about the need to cure diabetes.

### Worth quoting

"Spring has returned. The earth is like a child that knows poems."  
Rainer Maria Rilke

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has a neck but no head?

**A:** A bottle.



## I can cope

When your tween loses a soccer game, feels rejected by the girl he likes, or gets a bad grade on a test, how does he react? Encourage him to handle the curve balls life throws his way with positive strategies like these.

### Unwind the healthy way

Explain that everyone faces problems—it's how they deal with them that matters. Point out ways you manage setbacks. You might say, "I'm going to relax with a good book tonight and start my job search again tomorrow." Ask your middle grader to come up with activities he could do when he is upset or stressed out, such as going for a run, playing with a pet, or watching a funny movie.

### Build support circles

Discussing problems can help your child solve them and prevent bad feelings from building up. Suggest that he think of adults he could talk to if he's worried or overwhelmed. He should



include people who will listen and offer guidance, such as parents, a favorite aunt or uncle, supportive teachers or coaches, or his school counselor.

### Take care of yourself

Your youngster will cope better if his basic needs are met. Remind him that kids his age need nine or more hours of sleep each night. Also, explain that he should eat a healthy diet, drink plenty of water, and get at least an hour of exercise every day. *Note:* If your tween is frequently upset or seems withdrawn, talk to his pediatrician. 👍

## Geography games

Where in the world is Montenegro? Which states would you drive through from Texas to Maine? Play these two games to help your child learn more about geography.

**1. Map race.** Find a world map in an atlas or online. Then, read the newspaper with your tween, and have her list 10 countries that are mentioned. Together, use a timer to see how fast you can find all 10 on the map. *Idea:* Ask her how countries' locations might be related to current events.

**2. State dominoes.** Get a U.S. map, and tell your middle grader to write all 50 state names on separate slips of paper. Mix up the slips, and deal 25 to each player. Take turns laying slips end-to-end—like dominoes, except states on touching slips must share a border on the map (Alaska and Hawaii can each touch the two closest states). The winner is the last person who can make a play. 👍

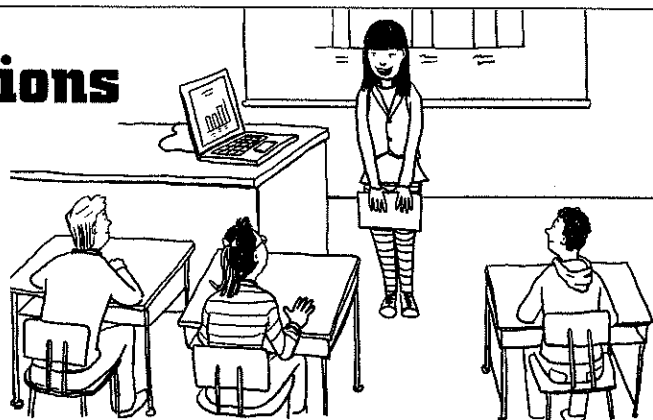


# Better presentations

Class presentations let your middle grader practice public speaking skills that she'll use throughout school and on the job. Share the following tips for success.

**Start and finish strong.** Your child should use an attention-grabbing introduction and a memorable conclusion. If she's doing a report on Colonial America, for instance, she might begin with a quote from a colonist. She could wrap up with a lesson that she learned from early settlers' experiences.

**Choose visual aids carefully.** Visuals should add to or support what your middle grader says. She might create a



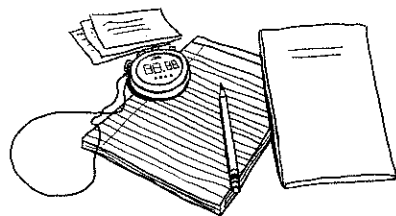
graph that shows the colonies' populations or find a political cartoon from the time period.

**Practice thoroughly.** Encourage your tween to rehearse until she can speak without constantly looking at her notes or PowerPoint slides. Suggest that she

practice in front of family or friends or videotape herself to see how she could improve. For instance, she may need to fidget less, speak more slowly, or avoid saying "like" or "um." 👍

## Q & A Statewide tests

**Q** My son has standardized tests coming up. How should he get ready?



**A** Your child will feel more prepared if he knows what the tests cover and what the formats will be. For instance, a reading test might contain short articles and stories with multiple-choice questions. Encourage him to listen carefully during test reviews and ask his teacher if he needs more information.

To get used to working under time constraints, suggest that your son do practice problems or test reviews with a stopwatch. He could also look over old tests to jog his memory of what he has learned this year.

Finally, the week of the tests, talk to him about how it's going. He'll know you're interested, and you'll show him that the tests are important. 👍

## Parent to Parent Friendship drama

My daughter Maggie came home confused when her friend Sarah got mad at the rest of their group of friends. Sarah didn't want to sit with them at lunch anymore, and she asked Maggie to start eating with her.



Maggie felt torn—she wanted to be friends with everyone, and she didn't want anyone to be upset. So we discussed ways to handle the situation. She decided to tell the group that she'd sit with them a couple days a week and with Sarah the other days.

She still hangs out with the other girls outside of school and invites Sarah to do things separately. Sarah hasn't made up with the others, but she and Maggie have remained friends. I'm glad my daughter found a way to compromise, and I hope the experience will help her the next time there is a problem with her friends. 👍

## Adapting rules for tweens

As tweens grow and change, household rules often need to change, too. Try these ideas.

■ **Meet in the middle.** You may decide that some things can be handled on a case-by-case basis. Rather than saying "No going out on school nights," for example, you might consider each instance. Maybe your child can hang out with friends if he doesn't have much homework and finishes it after school.

■ **Talk about why.** When your middle grader asks why you've

made a decision, explain your reasoning, and stand firm. "You can't go because your chores aren't finished" is better than "Because I said so."

■ **Expand privileges gradually.** Give freedom little by little to see how your youngster handles it. If he wants to walk around the mall with friends, you could take him, stay there, and meet an hour later. If all goes well and he shows up when you agreed, you might drop him off or let him stay longer next time. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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