

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops

The art of compromise



The next time your middle schooler disagrees with a friend, use the opportunity to help her learn about compromise. Encourage her to think of solutions that are acceptable to everyone. For example, she might say, "So you pick the movie this week, and I'll choose one next week."

Attention, please

Help your child get the most out of class time. How? Share the SLANT method with him: Sit up straight and near the front, Lean forward, Ask questions, Nod to show you understand, Track the teacher with your eyes.

Curbing foul language

Middle graders might think swear words make them sound cool or grown-up. But explain to your youngster that cursing gives others a bad impression of her and is not acceptable. To help stop it, consider creating a "swear jar"—it will cost a quarter each time a family member uses bad language. At the end of each month, donate the money to a charity.

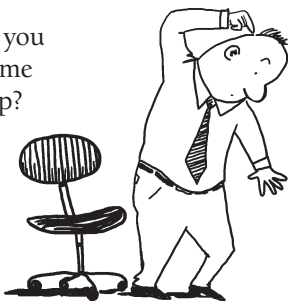
Worth quoting

"Gratitude consists of being more aware of what you have than what you don't." *Anonymous*

Just for fun

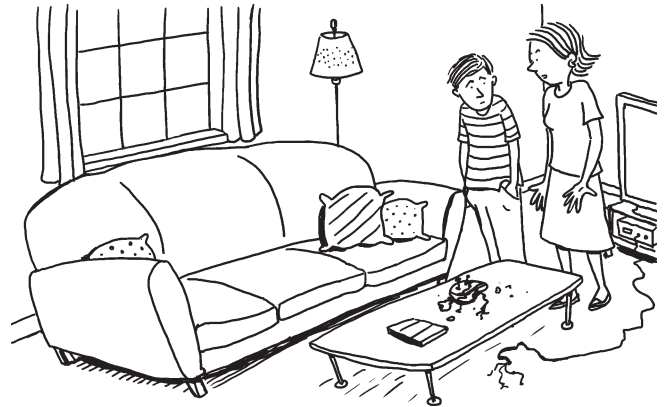
Q: What do you lose every time you stand up?

A: Your lap.



Discipline that works

Your usually pleasant middle grader kicked his brother when he got frustrated. Or he invited friends over when he was home alone. You know you need to discipline him, but what's the most effective way at this age? The right consequences can be a useful tool to help your child improve his behavior. Here's how.



Make it fit

Decide on consequences before you need them. That way, you can choose them carefully. If you wait until your child breaks a rule to announce what will happen, you're more likely to overreact and come up with something that's difficult to enforce. ("You're not going anywhere for a month!") Be sure to tell your tween about the consequences up front so he knows what to expect.

Make it matter

Tie the results of your middle grader's behavior to his actions (say, not being able to go out next weekend if he lied

about where he was last weekend). And choose consequences that matter to your child so he cares about their impact. For example, if he texts at the dinner table, he's likely to be more upset about losing cell phone privileges than being sent to his room.

Make it right

Let your tween know that he must make up for bad behavior. If he throws and breaks the controller after losing a video game, he will have to replace it with his own money. Having to correct the situation will help him stop and think before he does the same thing again. 👍

Teaming with teachers

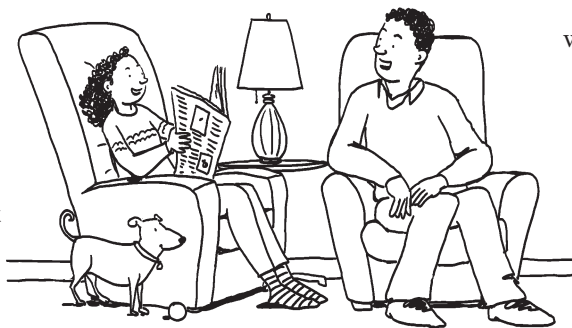
To support your child's education, put parent-teacher conferences high on your to-do list. Here are some tips:

- Review your middle grader's schoolwork and interim reports before the conference. If you see areas where she's falling short, ask her teachers for suggestions.
- Let teachers know about things that might be affecting your child (divorce, parent out of work, deployed family member). This can help teachers understand your child and offer support when necessary.
- If you need a translator at the conference, request one in advance. Or arrange to take along a friend or family member who can help. 👍



Good thinking!

Can your middle grader come up with more than one solution for a problem? Determine whether something she reads is valid? Draw conclusions based on what she reads? These are all critical-thinking skills—and your child needs them to thrive in middle school and beyond.



when she has a problem to solve, encourage her to think of several ways to handle it.

Evaluating information

Have your middle grader read an editorial in the newspaper. Ask questions to help her analyze what she has read. *Examples:* What are the writer's credentials? Does he use facts

Solving problems

Share issues that you're trying to address ("I need to save money on gasoline"). Let your youngster hear you brainstorm solutions: "I could carpool with a coworker, combine errands, or drive the smaller car that gets better gas mileage." Then,

and statistics to back up his views? Are they logical? She'll need to distinguish between facts and opinions and may have to do some research to answer those questions.

Drawing conclusions

Let your child choose a paragraph from a mystery and read it out loud. What does she think is going on? Suggest that she use what she has read to draw conclusions. For instance, if it says, "His hands shaking, Mark turned the key," she can conclude that Mark is scared or nervous. 👍

Clever cards

Here's a study technique that can help your middle grader remember facts and formulas.

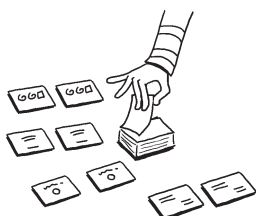


Sequencing

Sometimes information needs to be remembered in a certain sequence, such as steps in a scientific process or events in history. Suggest that your child write each step or event on a separate index card (without numbering the cards). To study, he can shuffle and reshuffle the cards, putting them back in order until he consistently gets it right.

Matching

Your youngster can also use cards to study facts. Have him write each term and its



matching fact on separate cards. *Examples:* vocabulary words and definitions, countries and their capitals. Then, he can shuffle the cards, spread them out facedown, and try to match up pairs.

Idea: Suggest that he make studying into a game by playing with a classmate or family member. Each person could create a set of cards for the other one to put in order or match. 👍

Q & A

Help for ADHD

Q My son was just diagnosed with ADHD. How can I help him be successful in middle school?

A If your child doesn't already have an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) or a Section 504 plan, ask the school to create one. The plan should spell out what he needs academically (extra copies of textbooks at home, more time to complete tests, less homework).

Also, it's more important than ever for your son to be organized. Having a daily planner or to-do list can be helpful. He should also sort through his backpack and locker on a weekly basis.

At this age, your child needs to be involved in managing his ADHD. Together, discuss strategies he can use to help himself. For instance, he might call a friend to double-check on assignments each evening or take a homework break every 20 minutes. Suggest that he experiment with ideas and see what works best for him. 👍



Parent to Parent

Cooking up healthy meals

Our family had a habit of grabbing fast food because it was convenient. After reading several articles that said home-cooked meals are healthier than most fast food, I decided to make a change.

I started with a goal of three home-cooked dinners a week. I made a list of the items I needed for each meal and went shopping.

One night, I made a tossed salad and salmon and added a loaf of hot, crusty

bread. For another meal, I put chuck roast, potatoes, carrots, and onions in a slow cooker before I went to work, and dinner was ready when I got home.

We still get takeout sometimes, but we're making healthier choices. Last week, we ordered a thin-crust pizza with light cheese and vegetables.

Eating at home is a lot easier than I expected. And my family is eating foods that are more nutritious. 👍



OUR PURPOSE

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

Resources for Educators,
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www.rfeonline.com
ISSN 1540-5540