

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Animal antics

Inspire your middle grader's curiosity about the natural world—and enjoy some family fun—by spending a spring afternoon at the zoo. Let your child take the lead on which animals to visit. Perhaps she'll want to snap photos or look for activities like handling reptiles in a "discovery room" or feeding tropical birds.

### Honesty matters

One way to encourage honesty in your youngster is to make sure you describe things accurately. Instead of saying "I'll only be a minute" when you'll likely be longer, give a better estimate. Otherwise, he might get the idea that stretching the truth is okay.

### Real-life stories

Biographies may motivate your tween to read by sparking her interest in the lives of real people. Plus, a good biography can help your child connect to history or current events, learn important character traits, and boost reading skills. Together, visit your library's biography section, and pick out books to take home.

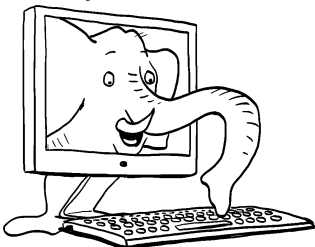
### Worth quoting

"Before anything else, preparation is the key to success." *Alexander Graham Bell*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What do you get when you cross a computer with an elephant?

**A:** Lots of memory!



## All kinds of kindness

Did you know that being kind not only makes tweens feel happier, it makes them more likely to succeed in school and to have more friends? That's because doing kind acts connects them with others and motivates them to care about doing well.

Help your child turn kindness into an everyday habit with these ideas.



### Watch for openings

Have your middle schooler look for opportunities to be kind. If he has a friend whose mother is sick, he could think about ways to support him like asking how he's doing or inviting him to do something fun. Showing kindness during a stressful time will strengthen a friendship—and your child's character.

### Be a model

Seeing kindness in action may encourage your tween to behave kindly, too. Invite him to go with you when you run an errand for a neighbor, and point out

why you're helping. "Mrs. Johnson had knee surgery and can't drive, so we're picking up her groceries for her." Going out of your way for another person lets him see that kindness is important.

### Take action

When your child asks himself, "Who needs help?", he's taking an important step in expressing compassion. He might decide to collect toiletries for a women's shelter, read aloud to wounded soldiers, or spearhead a soccer team car wash to raise money for the homeless. 👍

## Spring into study time

Nice weather may pull your child outdoors and away from her studies. Have her try these strategies to combine schoolwork, sunshine, and physical activity:

■ Your tween could go with friends to a nearby park and work at a picnic table. Every 20 or 30 minutes, they might take a five-minute break to do stretches, shoot hoops, or jog around the playground.

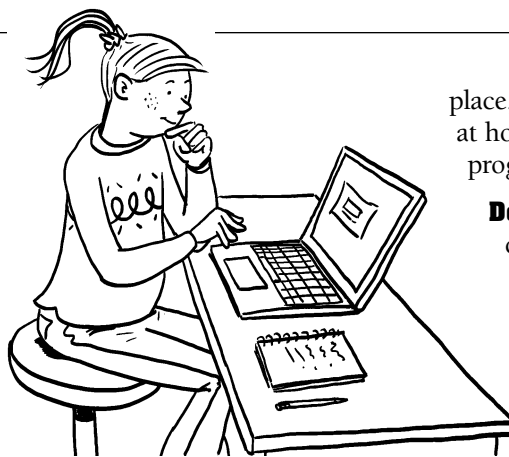
■ Suggest that your middle schooler study with classmates in someone's yard or driveway. They can stand in a circle and toss a ball back and forth to quiz each other. To start, one person asks a question and tosses the ball. Whoever catches it answers the question and asks the next one. 👍



# Stay safe online

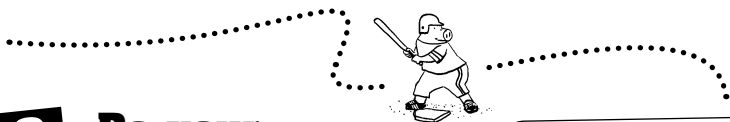
Encourage your middle schooler to be a tech whiz who's also tech-wise. Share these online safety tips.

**Set strong passwords.** To make them harder for hackers to guess, passwords should be at least eight characters and include capital letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid obvious ones like *mypassword* or *5678*. Use different passwords for different sites, and change them every few months. Also, let your tween know never to share her passwords or enable others' fingerprints on touch ID. And she should keep her passwords in a secure



place, such as a notebook she hides at home or a safe online password program.

**Don't leave a trail.** Your child can guard her privacy by keeping her personal information off the Internet. That means no full name, phone number, city or town, or school. Insist that she create usernames that don't identify her (like *hamsterlove12* instead of *abysmith5*). She also shouldn't mention her name, city, or school in online posts or social media profiles (if she has any) or tag pictures with locations. The less revealing information she provides online, the safer she'll be in the real world. 👍



## Q & A Do your best work

**Q** My son sometimes makes careless mistakes on his homework and loses points. How can I get him to try his best?

**A** Explain to your son that working hard will help him succeed at whatever he wants to do in life. Part of that is making sure his work is neat, complete, and contains proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling.



Offer to help him come up with a plan for how he might avoid simple mistakes. For example, he could look through past assignments and tests to create a list of errors he often makes (writing *your* instead of *you're* or forgetting to capitalize proper nouns). Then, he can use his list to double-check his work.

Also, show your tween that his schoolwork matters by inviting him to tell you about what he's studying. Have him show you graded assignments, and if you notice he's improving, point out that he should feel proud. 👍

## What's the probability?

What are the odds of drawing the card you need when you're playing a game? Try this card game to explore *probability*, or the likelihood that an event will occur.



**Materials:** ace–10 of one suit of cards (spades, hearts, diamonds, or clubs)

1. Shuffle the cards, and stack them facedown. (Ace = 1.)
2. The first player draws the top card and lays it faceup. He predicts whether the next card will be higher or lower. *Tip:* He should consider which card was drawn and which ones remain. If he drew an 8, then 7 cards are lower, but only 2 are higher, so getting a lower card is more likely.
3. The same player takes the next card. If his prediction was correct, he keeps both cards. If not, they go on the bottom of the deck.
4. Take turns until all the cards are used. The person with the most cards wins. 👍

## Parent to Parent Sibling squabbles

My tween daughters seem to be experts at arguing. I usually step in to help solve the problem since I just want them to get along. But that's upsetting for me and often leaves all of us frustrated.

I mentioned the problem to their pediatrician. She said middle schoolers need to learn how to handle conflict and that working things out with a sibling can be great practice. She suggested that I let them know I'm going to stay out of their squabbles unless

someone might get injured. She also mentioned ways they could settle their issues, like looking for compromises or setting a timer and picking a solution before time runs out.



Now when I hear my children arguing, I stay out of it or just say, "Work it out." I notice that I don't get as agitated by their bickering. And I'm hoping the practice will help them solve conflicts in other relationships, too. 👍

### OUR PURPOSE

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

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