

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Year-end planning

As the school year winds down, your child's schedule will fill up with exams, projects, and events. To stay on top of everything, she might write obligations on a wall calendar. Or she could use an electronic calendar and share it with you so you're in the loop.

### Acne advice

A good skin-care routine helps prevent or reduce acne. Encourage your middle grader to wash his face with a cleanser twice a day. Tell him not to pop pimples, since that could cause scarring. If the problem persists, consider taking him to a dermatologist.

### Sixty-second challenges

For a quick, fun way to connect with your tween, have family members create challenges you can do in a minute or less! For example, set a timer and race to see who can stack the most plastic cups one-handed. Or compete to be the first to wriggle a cookie from your forehead to your mouth.

### Worth quoting

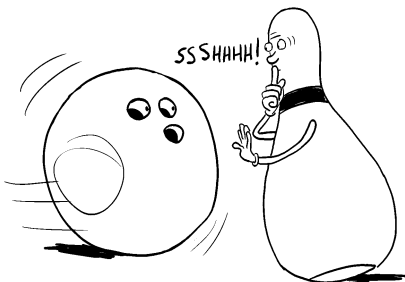
"It is spring again. The earth is like a child that knows poems by heart."

Rainer Maria Rilke

### Just for fun

**Q:** Why should you be quiet at a bowling alley?

**A:** So you can hear a pin drop.



## On a roll with reading

Reading for pleasure on a regular basis will boost your tween's vocabulary and general knowledge, and it may improve his test scores, too. Get him on board with these strategies.

### Find a good fit

Falling in love with reading may simply be a matter of finding the right books. Suggest that your middle grader try the first book in a popular series—if he enjoys it, he may be eager to read the next one. Also, he can get lists of books similar to those he likes by googling the title plus the term "read-alikes."

### Read with friends

Offer to drive your child to meet friends at the library. They might browse the shelves for fiction or nonfiction based on their own interests, then find a spot to settle in and read side by side. Or perhaps they'll all get copies of the same book to



read at home. When they finish, they could meet up to discuss their thoughts about the book.

### Family story hour

If you think your tween has outgrown listening to you read to him, think again! In fact, children of all ages benefit from being read to. Offer to read the first chapter or two of a book out loud. Then, leave the book where he'll find it. He just may get hooked and read the rest on his own. 👍

## Raise an appreciative child

Tweens don't always realize how much their parents and others do for them. Help your child feel and express appreciation, and ward off a sense of entitlement, with these ideas:

- Teach your tween to be grateful for things she might consider no big deal.

Maybe you wait in the car every week during her music lesson, or a friend's mom drives her to a birthday party. Encourage her to think about the effort involved ("It was nice of Mrs. Lake to go out of her way to pick you up") and to say thank you.

- Explain that you provide for your middle grader's *needs*, but set an expectation that she'll save or work for *wants*, like a skateboard or video game. Suggest that she do odd jobs, such as babysitting or washing cars, to earn money. 👍



# Conflict resolution: Find your path

When your child has a disagreement with a friend or sibling, she can actually use the experience to improve her relationship. How? By handling the situation the right way. Suggest these steps.

**1.** Ask your tween to think about how she normally reacts to a conflict. Is she a “hippo” who charges into an argument, a “turtle” who withdraws from clashes, or a “deer” who freezes when a squabble puts her in the spotlight?

**2.** Once your middle grader knows her usual response, she can adjust as needed. A hippo may need to walk away to



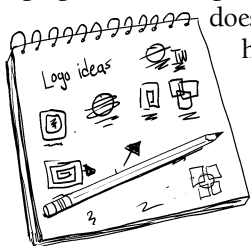
calm down or to remind herself to listen quietly. A turtle might think about how good it feels when problems are solved, then make an effort to discuss the situation. A deer could admit, “I don’t know what to say,” and agree to talk after she thinks things over.

**3.** Encourage your child to practice new responses until they feel natural. Discuss how conflicts work out when she responds one way vs. another—what seems to get the best results? 🍊

## Design a logo

Ask your child to imagine he’s starting his own company. What logo would send the right message to his audience? By designing one, he’ll practice creative thinking and build communication skills. Here’s how.

First, encourage him to think critically about logos on websites, food packaging, and clothing. For instance, why does the Amazon logo have an arrow that goes from A to Z?



Then, have your middle grader research what people associate with

certain colors, shapes, and fonts. For example, yellow is often considered cheerful, and squares are thought to hint at trust and stability. Different fonts can convey everything from fun to elegance.

Now your tween could use what he learned to design his logo. For a tech support company, he might choose yellow, a square, and a futuristic-looking font to suggest that he’s cheerful and that customers can trust him to solve their technology problems. 🍊



## Q&A

### Mental health ed

**Q** My son’s school started putting mental health lessons into health class. Why is this necessary?

**A** The school wants to keep students safe and healthy—physically and mentally. That’s why they’re trying to help children recognize and deal with mental health problems like depression and suicidal thoughts.

Ask your son what he’s studying in health class, just as you would with any subject. For example, he may be learning about symptoms of depression or how to ask for help if he has suicidal thoughts. Let him know he can come to you if he feels down or thinks about harming himself.

If you’d like to find out more, talk to your son’s health teacher, school counselor, or administrator about the curriculum they use and how you can support him at home. 🍊



## Parent to Parent

### Learning about heritage

I recently started researching my family’s genealogy. When I mentioned this to my daughter, Evelyn, she wanted to help out. It turned out to be an interesting history and geography lesson for her—and for me.

I knew about our Spanish heritage, but after talking to my parents and digging a little deeper online, Evelyn and I discovered that we also had ancestors from England and

France. On one genealogy site, she searched for old census records that traced some relatives all the way back to the mid-1700s. Then we looked at maps to see where they lived.

Evelyn has decided to make a family tree for an upcoming social studies project. She needs to know where the other half of her family came from, so she’s going to do genealogy research on her mom’s side of the family next. 🍊



## OUR PURPOSE

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

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