

May 2020

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### What's fair?

"That's not fair!" If you hear your tween say this, take the opportunity to discuss what fair actually means. Say her brother gets to stay up late, but she can't because she has swim practice early in the morning. Point out that everyone has different needs, so what's fair for one may not be fair for another.

### Thanking teachers

As the school year winds down, encourage your child to show appreciation for his teachers. He could make bookmarks and list favorite memories or topics he enjoyed in class. Or he might fill a jar with dry ingredients to bake cookies. Simply saying thank you in person or writing a heartfelt note means a lot, too.

### A head start on next year

Get your middle grader excited about next year's electives by planning outings related to what she'll study. If she's taking woodworking, maybe your family could attend a workshop at a local home improvement store. Or look for a summer concert series if she signed up for band or chorus.

### Worth quoting

"If you have good thoughts, they will shine out of your face like sunbeams, and you will always look lovely."

*Roald Dahl*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What's blue and smells like red paint?

**A:** Blue paint.



## Learning that fits in

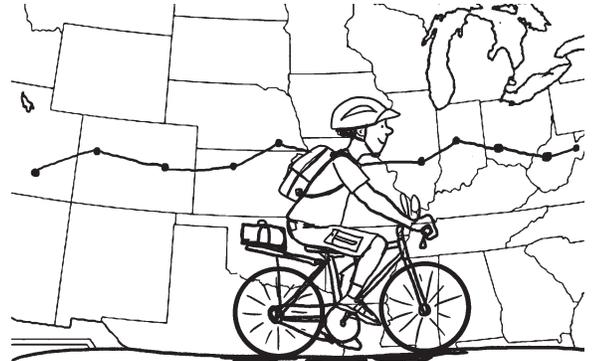
Your child's brain is like an engine. While it's revved up to learn, he can keep it running—and build on that momentum—so he's ready to go next school year. These activities will help his mind stay sharp over break.

### Explore animation

Encourage your child to watch an animated movie and then read books or websites to learn about the process behind it. He could even try his hand at animation on a site like *animaker.com*. Together, watch an animated film that you enjoyed as a child—he may be surprised by how much animation has changed since you were his age.

### Go the distance

How far can your middle grader bike, rollerblade, run, or walk this summer? Suggest that he record his distance each time and track his progress on a U.S. map. At the rate he's going, how far will he "travel" by summer's end? *Example:* If he bikes 12 miles a week for 12 weeks, he would



draw a line to a spot that's 144 miles away. Where could he go if he added two miles a week?

### Analyze product reviews

If your child is in the market for something new (tent, basketball, headphones), have him read reviews to identify comments that are most helpful. For instance, buyers might include pros and cons of the product. Or they may give information about themselves to help put their opinions in context. ("I am an experienced camper who has tried many tents.") Your tween can use the information to decide which product he prefers. 👍

## Safely home alone

As your child gets older, there will be times when she's home by herself. Whether that's now or later, it's never too early to start talking about household safety. Here's how.

1. Make sure your tween knows not to answer the door unless she can see who's knocking—and it is someone you've agreed she can let in.
2. Show her where you keep the first-aid kit, and explain how to use what's inside.
3. Go over which household appliances your middle grader may use and how to operate them safely.
4. Have your child put emergency contacts in her phone or post a list on the refrigerator. Point out that she should always keep her phone or your landline receiver charged. 👍



# Talking to your tween

Does the phrase “mum’s the word” remind you of your middle grader? Tweens tend to share less information with their parents as they become more independent. Consider these strategies for staying close.

**Vary the approach.** Your tween may be more likely to open up if you talk while doing something else. Invite her along on errands and chat as you drive. Or talk during a walk or run. If you need to discuss a sticky topic (say, she got a zero for a missing homework assignment), give her a heads-up rather than diving right



in. (“Let’s set aside a time to talk about grades. Do you want to chat while I cook dinner or before bed?”)

**Keep it light.** Regular, casual conversations may make heavier discussions easier. If your child is laughing at a video, ask her to show it to you. Mention good news you hear about her favorite celebrities.

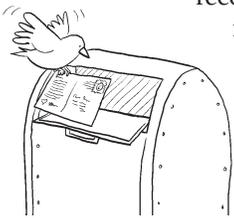
(“Her latest movie got great reviews!”) Also, bring up little

things that happen in your day, like being happy about a compliment from your boss. She may respond by telling you something about her day, too. 👍

## Micro writing

Tweets, texts, instant messages ... tweens may not realize it, but all that writing in short bursts lets them practice choosing words carefully and being concise. Help your child practice micro writing offline with these ideas.

**Postcard review.** Encourage your tween to mail a postcard with a book recommendation to a friend or relative. In the small space available, he’ll need to concisely make his case for why the person should read the book.



## Q & A Prepare for final exams

**Q** My son has final exams for the first time. How are these different from other tests, and how can I help him do his best?

**A** Finals typically cover material from the entire semester or school year. And an exam grade is usually worth a higher percentage of your child’s overall grade than a score on a regular test.

Have your tween set aside time to complete any review packets the teacher gives him. Also, encourage him to look at the table of contents in each textbook. He may find that chapters he studied earlier in the year aren’t as fresh in his memory. He should spend extra time studying those topics and ask his teacher about anything he doesn’t understand.

Finally, suggest that your child plan study sessions with friends. You might offer to host the group at your home or drive them to the library. 👍



**Mini-autobiography.** Challenge family members to write Tweet-sized autobiographies. You’ll need to weigh every word to sum up your life in 280 characters or less.

**Today’s headlines.** Suggest that your middle grader write five headlines that could appear in a news recap of his day. *Example:* “A muddy start: Morning dog-walk mishap.” 👍

## Parent to Parent Nature: A natural mood booster

Our daughter Avery was diagnosed with depression. After a recent therapy appointment, she shared something interesting that she learned: Enjoying nature can improve people’s mental health, whether they have depression or not. So we decided that our whole family could benefit from appreciating nature more often.

We found a nearby nature center with creeks, woodland trails, and a butterfly garden. It was very peaceful, and Avery seemed content there. A

ranger even gave us a tour of the garden and pointed out the flowers that butterflies prefer. On the way out, we noticed a sign asking for teen volunteers for children’s summer programs, and my daughter decided to sign up.

Avery seems hopeful about the summer. She’ll be spending time in nature—while helping others and gaining volunteer experience. In the

meantime, we’ve been taking regular walks at our regional park, and we’ve planned a camping trip for Memorial Day weekend. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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