

Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



Short Stops

Saying "thanks"

As the school year winds down, encourage your child to thank her teachers with nice notes or small gifts. Or she might go in with friends to fill a beach bucket or a basket with treats like scented lotion, stationery, tea, or a bookstore gift card.

Stop mumbling

Does your middle schooler mumble when he speaks? This is common as tweens become more self-conscious, particularly if their voices are changing. Give your child practice speaking in situations where it's important that he's understood. For example, at the barber shop, have him tell the hair-cutter how short he wants his hair.

DID YOU KNOW?

Students who smoke marijuana get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of school. Ask your middle grader about her feelings on marijuana and if any of her friends have talked about trying it. Then, explain that marijuana is harmful to growing bodies—and that it is illegal for her to use it.

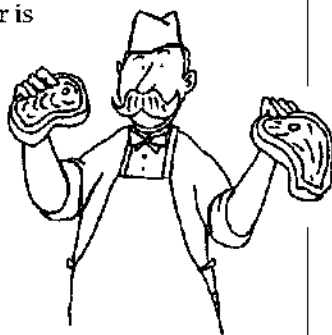
Worth quoting

"In summer, the song sings itself."
William Carlos Williams

Just for fun

Q: A butcher is 5'10" and wears size 13 shoes. What does he weigh?

A: Meat!



Learning that fits in

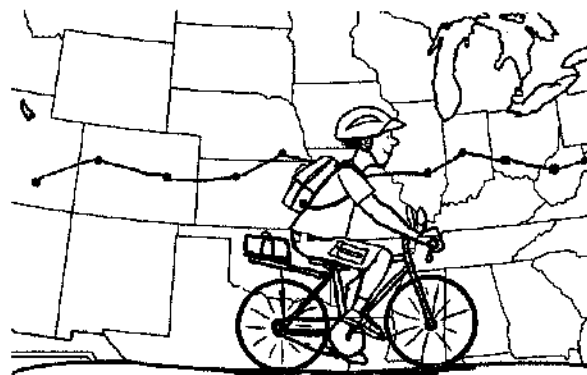
How does your tween plan to spend his summer days? Whether he is going to the movies, riding his bike, or picking out camping gear, he can keep his mind active and continue learning. Here's how.

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 fluxtime.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, swim, 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. 👍

Be an entrepreneur

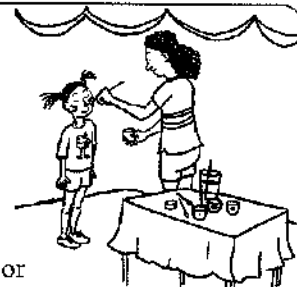
Starting her own business can give your middle grader work experience *and* something fun to do this summer. Share these suggestions.

■ **Event assistant.** Your tween might help local parents with celebrations like birthday parties or family reunions. She could put together party favors, set tables, take photos, or do face painting, for example.

■ **Yard genie.** Neighbors may need your child to water or mow lawns, or to plant flowers, prune bushes, or weed gardens.

■ **Parent's helper.** Suggest that your middle grader look for families who want someone to play with their children while they clean, work from home, or run errands.

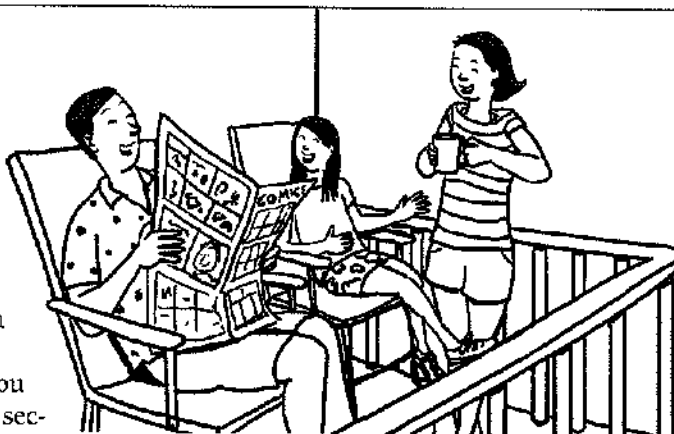
Tip: To advertise, she can hang flyers on community bulletin boards or ask family, friends, and neighbors to spread the word. 👍



Good company

One reward for the hard work of parenting is getting to enjoy your child's company! Try these ideas to share simple moments and stay close.

Laugh together. Being silly may strengthen bonds and ease tension from hectic schedules. You might show each other funny animal pictures or videos you find online. Or pass around the comics section of the newspaper.



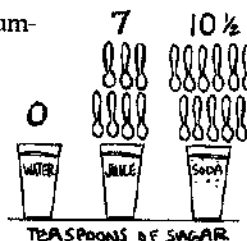
Share a treat. Make a special snack that your tween enjoyed when she was younger, or go out for a smoothie and listen to what she has to say. You might be surprised by what comes up—she may talk about a boy she has a crush on or a problem with a friend.

Activity Corner

Make an infographic

Let your child combine creativity and technology by making an infographic, or an "information graphic." It's fun—and it's good practice for research papers at school.

An infographic weaves together words, numbers, and images to compare things or to make a point. For example, it could be a flow chart that includes photos or a picture graph with fact boxes.



Next, have him pick a topic he's interested in. For instance, if he wants to lose weight, he might create an infographic comparing the sugar in drinks (soda, juice, milk, sports drinks, flavored water, tap water). Suggest that he read the labels and measure out the teaspoons of sugar in each one. Then, he could take photos to use in his infographic. Seeing the teaspoons of sugar piled up is a powerful way to encourage someone to drink water rather than soda!

Note: He can create his infographic on poster board or by using software like PowerPoint, Keynote, or Kidspiration. 👍

OUR PURPOSE

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

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Window shop. You don't have to spend a lot to enjoy a shopping adventure together. Browse garage sales, flea markets, or thrift stores for bargains. Seeing what your middle grader points out can help you get to know her changing tastes. Or take her to book or music stores, and let her tell you about her favorite authors and bands. 👍



Q & A

Summer safety

Q My son will spend a lot of time with friends while school is out. How can I keep him safe when he's away from home?

A Regular communication will go a long way toward making sure your child stays safe.

Before he leaves home, find out where he is going, who he will be with, and how he plans to get there and back. Have him repeat the details you've agreed on to be sure you're both clear.

Also, talk to his friends' parents before he goes to their houses. Ask whether they will be home (and tell them whether their kids will be supervised at your house). Finally, make sure your tween knows to check in if plans change. For example, if he's with a friend's family and they're running late, he should call to let you know. 👍



Parent to Parent

A smooth transition to high school

My daughter Lizzie has been feeling nervous about starting high school this fall. She will be separated from several friends who are going to a different school, and she's worried about having more homework and finding her way around a bigger building.

I asked Lizzie's school counselor how to help her prepare. He said that getting involved right away is a good way for new students to feel at home. Lizzie can check out

the school website and sign up for email announcements to decide on an activity. And she might even make new friends before school starts by attending summer sports tryouts and practices.

The counselor also suggested that she talk to current high school students—maybe neighbors or friends' older siblings. She could get advice for handling more homework and tips for getting to classes on time. 👍

