

March 2018

# Middle Years

Working Together for School Success



## Short Stops

### Savvy shopper

Show your tween that she can use math to be a smart consumer and save money. In a store, have her compare sale items. Say two brands of shirts cost the same, but one brand is “buy one, get one half off,” and another is 40 percent off. Which is the better deal if she buys two shirts?

### How-to for parents

If you have parenting questions, you may get answers at free workshops in your community. Speakers might focus on topics like how to ease your child's transition to high school or help him cope with anxiety. To find out about upcoming events, read emails from the school and look for flyers at the library or recreation center.

### Lights, camera, action

Many tweens love to make videos—and that can be a great study method. Encourage your middle grader and her friends to record each other reading class notes, demonstrating science experiments, or acting out historical events. They could use props, add music, or think of other creative ways to review the material.

### Worth quoting

“If you want children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.” *Abigail Van Buren*

### Just for fun

**Q:** How do you talk to a giant?

**A:** Use big words!



## Planning for standardized tests

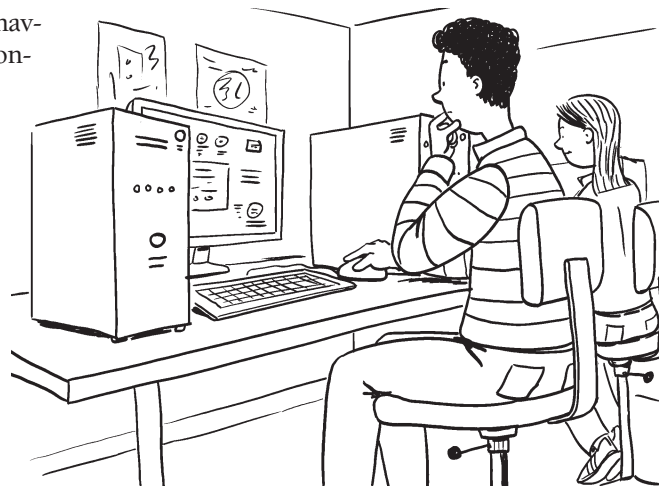
When your middle grader takes a standardized test, having a plan will boost his confidence and help him do his best. Here are strategies to use every step of the way.

### The week before...

Encourage your child to try his hardest on practice tests. Even if they're not graded, the results can reveal what he needs to brush up on. Suggest that he try to figure out where he went wrong on incorrect answers and ask his teacher if he's not sure. This may prevent him from making similar mistakes on the actual test.

### The day before...

Being well rested and well fed can keep your tween focused and alert. Before bedtime, help him plan a breakfast with protein and whole grains. You might hard-boil eggs while he sets out a cereal box, bowl, and spoon. Then, he'll need a good night's sleep (at least 9–11 hours). *Tip:* Have him pack a healthy



snack like an apple, whole-grain crackers, and water, if allowed.

### The day of...

Your middle grader should think carefully about how to approach different types of questions. If he's given a passage to read, he might skim the questions first so he knows what information to focus on. For multiple-choice math problems, he could solve first, then look to see if his solution is among the choices—if so, it's likely correct. 👍

## Bonding with your tween

Spending time with your child opens the door to conversation and keeps you involved in her life. Plus, it can be fun! Consider these ideas:

■ Create a family photo album. While you work, talk about memories the pictures bring to mind. *Tip:* When your middle grader has a rough day, flipping through the album together may encourage her to smile and perhaps talk.

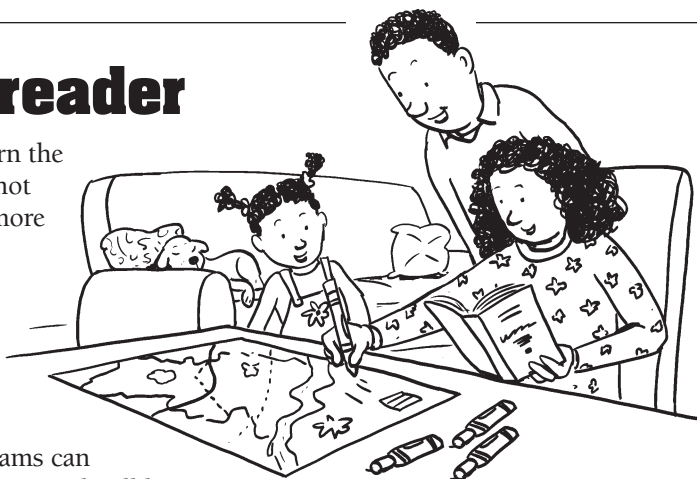
■ Have monthly living room campouts. Put out sleeping bags and popcorn. Then, take turns reading aloud or telling stories by flashlight. *Tip:* Your tween may be more likely to chat in the dark. When you turn out the lights, share something about your day, and she might follow suit. 👍



# Be an active reader

Does your middle grader ever turn the page of a book only to realize she's not sure what she's just read? Reading more mindfully can help her understand and remember important information. Try these tips.

**Preview.** Suggest that your tween scan for “coming attractions” before she reads. Skimming subheads, captions, charts, or diagrams can tell her what to expect. That way, her mind will be better prepared to take in the material.



**Apply.** Doing something with the information as she reads can keep your middle grader engaged. She might draw a map showing locations of the scenes in a novel, for instance. Or she could make an outline of a textbook chapter. That will help her remember key details and see how facts are related.

**Tip:** When your child reads online, suggest that she turn off any notifications and close all windows except for the one she's reading so she won't get distracted. 👍

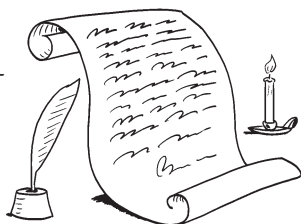


## This day in history

Your tween can learn about the past—and discover that history is being made every day—with these activities.

### Research the past

Encourage him to find out what happened on today's date in previous years. He could check the library or search “on this day in history” online. Then, ask him to share the “old news” with your family at dinner-time. For example, on March 1, he might report that the Peace Corps was established on this day in 1961.



## Parent to Parent

### Learning to lead

I had always believed the saying “Leaders are born, not made.” So at a recent work seminar, I was surprised to discover that leadership can be learned.

My son Jack had been wanting to start a neighborhood baseball team, and I realized it would be a good way for him to practice leadership skills. I suggested he call the local league and ask what to do first. They told him that he needed to find players and a coach and then get a local business to pay the league fees (in exchange for putting the company logo on the players' jerseys).

When I explained that a good leader delegates tasks, he asked three neighborhood kids to help him hang flyers and recruit players. Jack has been working hard on this project, and he has enough kids for a team now. Next, he will call a players' meeting to work on finding a coach and a sponsor. 👍



### Capture the present

Suggest that your middle grader make a record of the immediate past by starting his own “Today in History” calendar. When he learns about an event (say, a record-breaking blizzard or the release of a new cell phone model), have him jot it down on the correct day. Then, he might add a brief explanation or draw a symbol to represent it. 👍

## The dangers of internet challenges

**Q** I've been hearing about “internet challenges” where kids dare each other to do dangerous things.

How can I keep my daughter from getting involved in these kinds of risky games?

**A** In today's online world, dares can spread like wildfire. Children may be encouraged to post videos of themselves eating hot peppers or being duct-taped to a pole, for example. Other kids see the videos and might be tempted to copy them.

Keep an eye on your daughter's online activities, and make sure to stick to websites' age limits. For instance, you must be 13 to post on YouTube and most other social media sites.

Also, ask your daughter to tell you when she hears about a challenge. Explain that some can cause serious injury or even death, such as the “choking game” or “blackout game,” where participants cut off their own air supply. Be sure she knows she can come to you if she ever feels pressured to do something that makes her uncomfortable. 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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www.rfeonline.com  
ISSN 1540-5540