

January 2005

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Table tip

When your family sits down for a meal, ask your kids to pass the food at the table. Regularly practicing good manners will remind your children how to behave when you have guests for dinner or eat in a restaurant.

### Solution to math problems

Math problems are often like road trips—one wrong turn and you can easily get lost. Encourage your child to write down all the steps for each math problem. It may take longer, but it will be easier for her to check her work and correct mistakes.

### Movie watch

Is your middle grader itching to watch a particular movie? If you're unsure of the content, don't rely on the reviews printed on the package. Instead, watch it before making a decision. That way, you'll know if it's appropriate for your child.

### Worth quoting

"If you can give your son or daughter only one gift, let it be enthusiasm."  
*Bruce Barton*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What goes up and never goes down?

**A:** Your age!



## Discipline basics

Tired of grounding your middle grader for not following the rules? Discipline can be tough to apply. Each day brings new challenges that parents must address to keep their children on the right path.

Sticking to some discipline basics like these can help.

### Stand together

Parents should be a united team when it comes to discipline. Discuss general guidelines with your spouse to avoid the "But Dad said it was okay!" trap. And if your child asks to do something he's never done before, tell him you need to think about it. Then, discuss the matter privately with your spouse. Families operate more smoothly when both parents speak with one voice.

### Be firm

When you make decisions, it's important that you stick with them. Youngsters whose parents are likely to change their minds under pressure will try harder to get their way. Being consistent sends a strong message that can limit nagging. Your child will learn to accept your decision, even if she doesn't agree with it.

### Keep it simple

Too many rules can lead to confusion for both parents and middle graders. You're better off setting a few clear ground rules rather than listing an outcome for every situation. Keeping discipline simple allows kids to answer for



their actions. It also lets parents emphasize the importance of self-control. 🍊

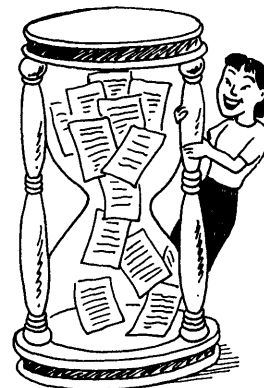
## Project pointers

At this time of year, middle graders are often busy with long-term assignments. Share these tips to help your child tackle projects.

**Start early.** Projects almost always take longer than expected. The sooner your middle grader begins, the more smoothly everything will go.

**Make a list.** Encourage your child to create a checklist that includes every step for the project. Double-checking the list will help him complete the entire assignment.

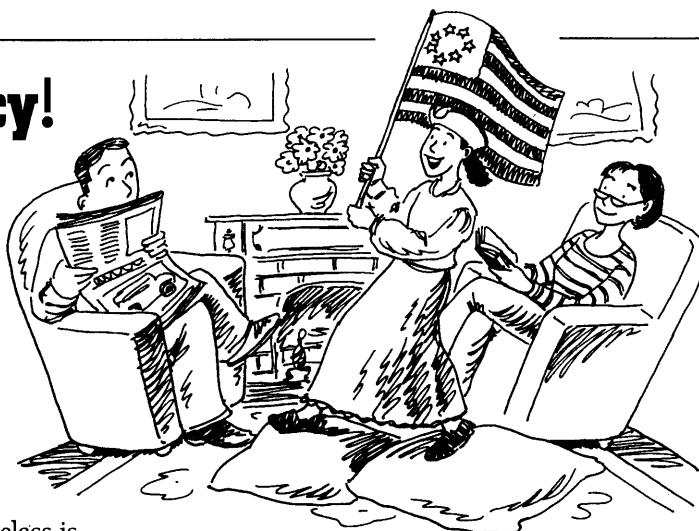
**Review.** Projects are usually graded on presentation as well as ideas. Allow time to review spelling, grammar, and basic facts. 🍊



# Stop truancy!

Most students have probably considered skipping school. But truancy is a serious matter. Being absent means your child is missing important instruction that helps her learn. Consider these steps to combat skipping.

■ Let your middle grader know that even one skipped class is unacceptable. If she cuts class because she's falling behind or having a tough time getting along with another student, help her arrange for tutoring, or suggest that she talk to the guidance counselor.

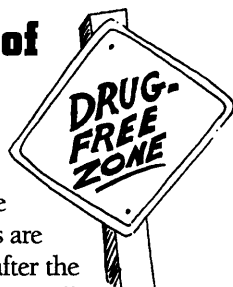


children's education, the more successful their kids are. This routine contact will remind your youngster that being in school every day is her most important job. 👍

■ Find out what your child is studying. Rather than simply asking, "How was school today?" try, "How was your quiz on the American Revolution?" Asking questions like this forces your middle grader to provide specific information and may cause her to think twice about skipping.

■ Get to know your middle grader's teachers. The more involved parents are in their

## The danger of drugs



Drugs are especially dangerous to middle graders because their bodies and minds are still developing. Long after the momentary high has worn off, the lingering effects of drug use—memory loss, stunted development, and even brain damage—continue.

In addition, drugs impair judgment. A recent study found that students who use alcohol and drugs are more likely to engage in sexual behavior than kids who don't.

Be aware of these signs of possible drug use in your middle grader:

- dramatic behavior changes (aggression, severe weight loss)
- sudden disinterest in hobbies
- drastic change in eating habits
- blackouts

If you suspect your child is using drugs, talk to your family doctor or school counselor immediately. 👍

**O U R P U R P O S E**

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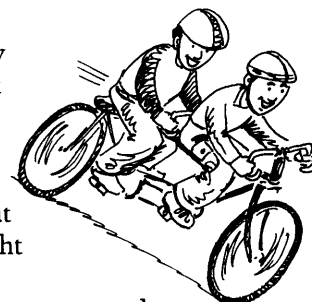
## Parent to Parent Finding real friends

Our son Eli recently started hanging out with a new friend. They seemed to get along in the beginning, but after a while, Mark started ignoring Eli.

One day Eli came home really upset. He told me Mark was spreading rumors about him at school. I asked Eli why he was friends with Mark. Turns out that Mark is a very popular kid. Eli admitted that he thought he'd be popular, too, if he hung around Mark.

I explained to Eli that a good friend is someone he can trust and who respects and likes him for who he is. I suggested that he try to make friends with kids who share his interests.

Eli has learned a valuable lesson about friendship. And he took my advice and made friends with several classmates in the school band. 👍



## Q & A Snack attack

**Q** How can I curb my family's junk food cravings?

**A** First, keep in mind the basics of healthy eating when buying food for your family. Be sure to offer them plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grains, and limited amounts of meat and cheese.

Also, avoid highly processed foods like potato chips and doughnuts, and limit foods containing sugar and other sweeteners such

as high fructose corn syrup. These foods contain lots of empty calories and will leave your kids wanting more.

Consider having regularly scheduled mealtimes to reduce excessive snacking. Encourage your children to start with smaller portions and only reach for seconds if they're really hungry. *Hint:* The old rule, "Eat everything on your plate," should be avoided because it can promote overeating. 👍

