

October 2008

# Middle Years

Working together for school success

## Short Stops



### Rapid recall

From state capitals to project deadlines, middle schoolers have a lot to remember. The poetry technique of alliteration—using several words starting with the same sound—is a good memory trick. “Study Spanish Sunday,” for example, could remind your child to review for a quiz.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Students who take part in extracurricular activities are more likely to get good grades, have higher self-esteem, and stay out of trouble. Encourage your youngster to get involved in a school or community activity. He might try the science club, band, the debate team, gymnastics, or soccer.

### Cleaner language

Children often experiment with inappropriate language to impress friends or feel grown up. Be sure your middle grader knows your opinion about bad language. Say, “I don’t like it when you talk like that. Please choose another word.” *Tip:* Set an example by not cursing or using other inappropriate words yourself.

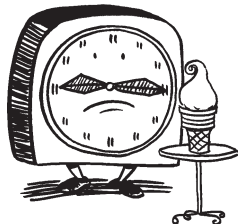
### Worth quoting

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”  
*Anne Frank*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What has two hands but can’t carry anything?

**A:** A clock!



## Focus on responsibility

Olivia agrees to help a neighbor who has a new baby, but when a friend invites her to go bowling, she wants to get out of the job.

This is a good time to teach your middle grader about the importance of being responsible. She’ll learn that responsibility has its rewards—here are three.

### Satisfaction

Help your child discover how it feels to be responsible. For example, when she studied for a test and did well, she probably felt proud. But when she lost a friend’s book, she may have felt ashamed. Remind her of those feelings the next time she’s struggling to make a decision.

### Freedom

The chance to earn more independence can encourage your youngster to act responsibly. Tell her that going to bed on time, for instance, shows you can depend on her. That means you’re more apt to say yes when she asks to stay later than usual at a friend’s house.

### Words that add up

“If Jillian has \$2.50, and she and Scott have \$10 altogether, how much does Scott have?”

Your child can solve a math problem like this one by translating the words into an equation. Share these steps:

1. Read the problem from start to finish so you know what it’s asking.
2. Look for words that tell what math operation to do. “Altogether” usually refers to addition, “less than” indicates subtraction, and “increased by” is a clue to multiply.
3. Set up an equation using  $x$  for the missing information ( $2.50 + x = 10.00$ ). Then, use your math skills to figure out what  $x$  is (\$7.50). 👍



### Recognition

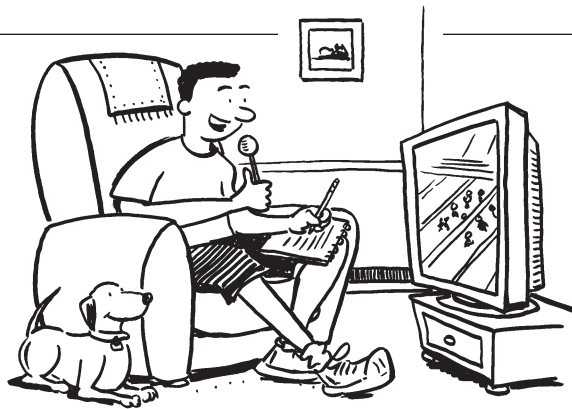
Be sure to notice your child’s responsible behavior, and she’ll be more likely to repeat it. If she takes out the trash without being asked or starts setting the table when you begin cooking dinner, let her know that you appreciate her efforts. 👍

# What to write?

Use your child's interests to stretch his imagination and motivate him to write creatively. Here are three ideas he can try.

**Review a movie.** If your child loves movies, have him read reviews of new films. Pick one to see, and ask him to write his own review afterward. He should summarize the movie and include his opinion. Then, let him e-mail his critique to his grandparents so they can decide whether to see the film.

**Write a sports broadcast.** Does your youngster dream of being a sportswriter? Encourage him to turn



off the sound when he watches a football game and record a play-by-play summary. He can use the recording to write a half-time report or game highlights. *Tip:* Suggest that he use lots of action words and exciting language.

**Compose an ad.** Perhaps your child is always scanning the ads for new products. Have him write an advertisement for a new video game or a cool sports car. He'll practice persuasive writing as he looks for ways to convince others to buy the item. 👍



## Parent power

Did you know that, on average, kids first try alcohol at age 11 and marijuana at age 12? But here's the good news: You can cut your child's chances of alcohol and drug use in half by talking with her often about the dangers. Try these ideas.



■ Brush up on the facts. Ask the school nurse for information, or search the Internet. At [www.timetotalk.org](http://www.timetotalk.org), you can learn street names and effects of illegal drugs.

■ Tell your child it's against your rules, and against the law, for her to try alcohol or drugs. Explain that her grades can suffer and that she can become addicted, be arrested, or even die.

■ Help her in the struggle against peer pressure. Keep her from tempting situations by making sure parties are supervised. Give her practice on what to say if she's offered drugs ("I can't—I'll get grounded"). 👍

## Parent to Parent Family volunteering

When my twins began middle school, I knew I needed to find new ways to spend time with them. A friend suggested that we volunteer together.

Her family had worked on a project to build a house for a needy family. She thought that experience had made her children more compassionate and strengthened her family's relationships, too.

She told me I could find volunteer opportunities by typing our zip code into the United Way's Web site ([www.liveunited.org](http://www.liveunited.org)). She also suggested that we contact our town's homeless shelter or senior center.

So far, we have sorted donations at a food pantry, worked at an animal adoption fair, and made greeting cards on our computer for homebound senior citizens. My daughters are learning that there are many ways to help others—and we're spending valuable time together. 👍



## Q & A Rules for messy rooms

**Q** *Our son's room is a mess, and we argue about it all the time. How can we encourage Jamal to keep it clean?*

**A** Try to reach a compromise. You might tell your son that you can live with his messy room, but you won't tolerate food or dirty laundry in there. Get him a trash basket for empty drink cans and food containers and a hamper for dirty laundry. You could

make a rule that he has to change his sheets and vacuum once a week, but let him choose the day.

Also, your son might be more apt to keep his room straight if he gets organized. Suggest that he keep school supplies in a shoebox and pencils in a mug. He could even clear out a corner to create a hangout spot with a large bin for books and a smaller one for his electronics (iPod, CDs). 👍



### OUR PURPOSE

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

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