

Middle Years

Working together for school success

Short Stops



Memory helper

Encourage your child to make up rhymes when studying. *Example:* While reviewing history notes, she could say, "In April 1861, the Civil War was begun." Like advertising jingles that stick in your head, rhymes are remembered more easily than lists of facts.

Sibling solution

When your children fight, separate them until they calm down. Then, ask them to tell you what's wrong. Ask each one to come up with a solution he likes—and one he would like if he were the other person. That just might encourage your kids to reach a fair compromise.

Summer success

Help your child get a jump start on a great summer. Have her think of activities she'd like to try, such as learning yoga or signing up for a summer reading program at your local library. You can also check for opportunities at your community center or parks and recreation department. Try to start looking now—summer activities can fill up fast.

Worth quoting

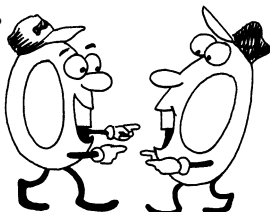
"It's kind of fun to do the impossible."
Walt Disney

Just for fun

Matt: I know what the score will be even before this game starts.

Sean: Really? What?

Matt: Zero to zero!



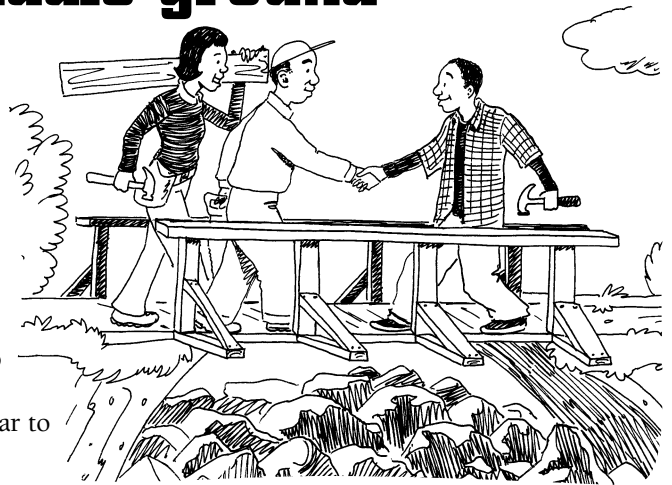
Finding middle ground

Michael: "I am not going with you!"

Mom: "Yes, you are."

Michael: "No, I'm not! I am staying here with my friends."

Power struggles may seem like a fact of life when you live with a middle grader. But it doesn't have to be that way. Try these strategies for keeping the tug-of-war to a minimum.



Stop struggling

Be matter-of-fact about what you want, and don't lose your cool. *Example:* "Let's get going. We'll talk about this on the way," instead of, "Get in the car now!" State firmly what you want to happen, leaving no room for arguments.

Choose wisely

Pick your battles, rather than treating every decision with equal importance. Does it really matter which day your child cleans his room? Maybe you can insist he straighten up once a week, but

let him decide when. On the other hand, it probably does matter how late he stays out. You can say, "Your curfew is not going to change, so there is no use in arguing."

Slow down

Power struggles can be attempts to get your attention. Try to carve out time to focus on being with your child. For instance, when he gets home from school or you get home from work, give him your complete attention for 10 minutes. Smile and ask about his day. Pausing to reconnect after a long day can ease tension and spark cooperation. ♥

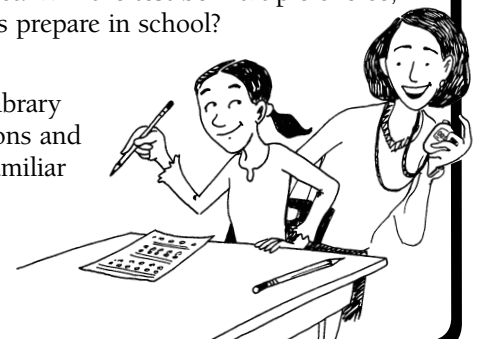
Tips for standardized tests

Spring is around the corner, which means standardized tests are around the corner, too. Take these steps to help prepare your middle grader.

Find out facts. Ask teachers what to expect. Will the test be multiple choice, fill in the blank, or essay? How will students prepare in school? What can you do at home to help?

Request samples. See if your school or library has practice tests. Go over sample instructions and questions to help your youngster become familiar with test basics.

Time homework. Get your child used to working under time constraints. Then, on test day, she won't feel as anxious. ♥



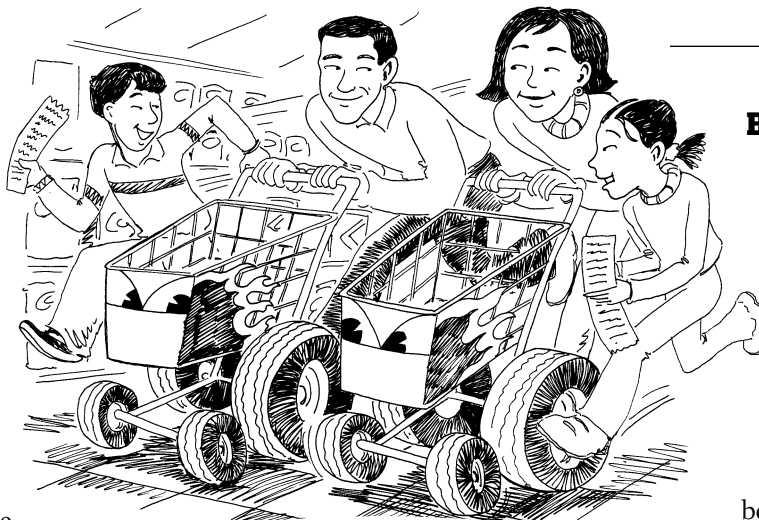
Family fun

What's more difficult as kids get older, but more important than ever?

Spending time together as a family! Find ways to create strong family ties—and have fun at the same time—with these ideas.

Throw a party

Once a month, decorate the house with balloons and pictures from a school play, baseball game, or band concert. Praise each person for what they've accomplished: "Barry learned to skateboard," or "Melissa learned a new dance routine."



Be creative

Turn everyday family moments into special family time. For example, on your next trip to the grocery store, split into teams (one parent and child per team). Divide the food list in half, and see who finishes first. Your children will remember these times for what they are: a fun way to be together.

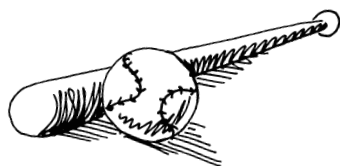
Invite friends

Middle graders love to have their friends around. Include one or two in your family time (picnic, trip to the museum), and your child will be more excited about joining in. As a bonus, you'll get to see how your youngster acts with friends and what they talk about.♥

Fair play

If you cheat to win a game, have you really won? Help your child see that cheating doesn't help anyone:

■ Explain that sports have rules to make the game fair. Clearly state that it is unacceptable to cheat (for example, to lie and say that the baseball was in your glove when you tagged a player).



■ Discuss consequences. If your middle grader cheats while playing a board game, his friends probably won't want to play with him again. Worse yet, he will lose their respect—and he won't feel good about himself either.

■ Too much focus on winning can increase pressure for a child to cheat. When your middle grader puts his best into a game, praise him and help him feel good about his effort.♥

Q & A Put math to work

Q My daughter says math is "stupid." How can I get her interested at home?

A Your daughter might like math more if she sees how it applies to life outside of school. Try letting her "play" the stock market. Show her the stock market pages in your daily newspaper, and tell her to pretend she has \$1,000 to invest. Have her figure out how many shares she can buy. If she likes computers, she might want to "invest" in software firms. If she likes fashion, she may look at clothing chains.

Suggest that your child track her stocks each day to see how her investment is doing. She can keep a chart to show the ups and downs.

Your daughter can also find out about stocks online. Have her check out www.stockmarketgame.org, where she can invest a hypothetical \$100,000, or www.prongo.com/stock to learn financial terms and track individual stocks.♥



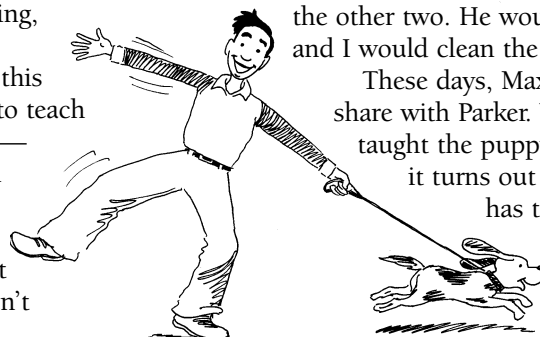
Parent to Parent Perseverance, please

Max was so excited when we got our puppy, Parker. "I'll take good care of him, Mom," he promised. But a month later, I was doing most of the walking, feeding, and cleaning up.

I decided that this was a good time to teach Max to persevere—or follow through on what he starts. I began by explaining that commitments aren't

always convenient, but being reliable means keeping your word. We talked about who would do what. Max would handle two walks a day, while I would do the other two. He would feed the dog, and I would clean the crate.

These days, Max is doing his fair share with Parker. We may have taught the puppy a few tricks, but it turns out that the puppy has taught Max the importance of persevering!♥



OUR PURPOSE

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

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