

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



May 2017

Title 1 Cooperative

Educational Service Unit #10

Six study strategies help middle schoolers review and remember

There's a difference between doing homework and studying. Your child may know how to complete his assignments, but does he know how to study effectively?

With no assigned task to finish, a study session's success hinges on your child's ability to review and retain information. To help him make the most of his study time, encourage your child to:

- 1. Take notes on the reading.** He should boil the material down to its most important parts.
- 2. Create flash cards** or other study aids to help him practice recalling the information.
- 3. Pay attention to illustrations** and charts in the textbook. These often present key material in easy-to-understand forms.
- 4. Describe what he's just read** in his own words. If he can't, it's likely he didn't understand it and he should read it again.
- 5. Keep a dictionary handy**, so he can look up words he doesn't know.
- 6. Limit distractions.** Quiet background music may be OK, but the TV and phone should be off. Family members should respect study time and keep noise to a minimum.



Source: "Tips for Helping Kids and Teens With Homework and Study Habits," Child Development Institute, niscw.com/study_habits.



Motivate your child to keep up effort

The learning that happens in the last few weeks of school is every bit as important as the learning that takes place earlier in the year. So it's vital for your child to stay focused and finish the year strong. To motivate her:

- **Stick to routines.** As the days get longer, don't relax rules and let your child stay up later. Morning comes as early as ever, and if your middle schooler doesn't get enough sleep, she may be unable to focus in class.
- **Show a continued interest** in your child's schoolwork. Just because you may be familiar with what goes on at school, don't stop asking about it. Let your child know you care about the things she is learning.
- **Maintain high expectations.** Remind your child that there will be consequences if her grades begin to slip or if she stops completing homework. The thought of missing fun at the movies or trips to the pool may inspire her to buckle down.

Empower your child with reading that inspires

Middle schoolers are beginning to think about their place in the world and the difference they can make. This summer, encourage your child to read about kids his age who are making the world a better place. Ask a librarian for suggestions.



Columns help students take notes that make sense

Taking organized class and reading notes helps students process information and gives them a useful tool for studying. Teach your child this method:

- **Divide a sheet of paper** into three columns.
- **In the first column**, your child can write down the main ideas.
- **In the second column**, she can fill in several facts about each main idea.
- **In the third column**, your child can draw a picture or graph that goes with each main idea. If there is no time to do this during class, she can add it later.

Source: A.K. Dolin, *Homework Made Simple*, Advantage Books.

Practice courtesy at home

In middle school, students learn many skills that will serve them in adulthood—including social skills. To reinforce the value of courteous behavior:



- **Avoid negative comments** about others. If your child hears lots of not-so-friendly comments from you, he'll think it's OK for him to make similar remarks.
- **Role-play.** Help your child practice the proper way to respond to others. When being introduced, for example, he should look the person in the eye, shake hands and say, "Hello, it's nice to meet you."



How can I smooth my child's transition to high school?

Q: My daughter loves middle school. She gets panicky, though, at the thought of starting high school in the fall. What can I do this summer to make this transition easier for her?

A: The transition from middle school to high school can be scary for many kids. But there are several things you can do this summer to prepare your child for the change. Make an effort to:

- **Listen to your child.** When she talks about her fears about high school, try to get to the root of the problem. It could be that she's most worried about getting lost in the halls and being late to class, for example. If you know exactly what her concerns are, you can help her address them.
- **Help her get organized.** Good habits will help your child manage high school's bigger workload. Give her a calendar she can use to write down her assignments. Or help her find a calendar app for her phone (remind her to follow school policy about phone use). Suggest she practice using it to keep track of her daily summer activities, commitments and chores.
- **Visit the high school.** If the school will have an orientation day, plan to attend. You can also call the office and arrange for your child to take a tour. The more familiar she is with the layout before school starts, the more comfortable your daughter will be on the first day.



Are you promoting summer safety?

Summertime is fun time. But for middle schoolers, who may not always be within sight of an adult, it can also be a risky time. Are you preparing your child to have a safe summer? Answer *yes* or *no* to the questions below:

- ___ **1. Do you keep track** of where your child is and who he's with? Do you discourage hanging out after dark?
- ___ **2. Do you insist** that he wear a helmet while riding a bike, scooter or skateboard?
- ___ **3. Do you require** your child to wear sunscreen outdoors?
- ___ **4. Do you encourage** your child to drink water when working, playing or exercising outdoors in the heat?
- ___ **5. Do you consider** your child's maturity before you

assign chores, such as trimming the bushes?

How well are you doing?

More yes answers mean you are focusing on summer safety. For each no, try those ideas.

"Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important."

—Stephen R. Covey

Encourage writing for fun

Summer vacation usually means kids have more free time. So it's a great time for them to experience the pleasures of writing without the pressure of a deadline. Encourage your middle schooler to write:

- **A review of a book** she has read. She should focus on whether she liked the book, why or why not, and whether she would recommend it to others.
- **Trivia questions** about a favorite topic. She can demonstrate her expertise.
- **Fan fiction.** Have your child choose her favorite characters from any kind of media and invent her own story about them.

Limit summer screen time

Studies have shown that school children watch more television during the summer than they do during the school year. Experts recommend limiting recreational screen time and promoting healthier alternatives.

Middle schoolers should use the summer to take on new responsibilities and explore new interests. Staring at a screen won't get your child very far on that journey.

Family ties support success

A break from the school-year routine can give families an opportunity to spend some quality time together. Here are some ways to reconnect with your child this summer:

- **Have more meals as a family.** Expect your child to eat with you and to help with preparation and cleanup.
- **Get active.** If there's a sport you and your child both enjoy, play it together. Or take evening walks and enjoy relaxed conversation.
- **Make memories.** Take lots of photos and have your child help you put them into an album or make a slideshow on the computer.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: L. Andrew McLaughlin.

Publisher Emeritus: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Alison McLean.

Staff Editors: Rebecca Miyares & Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Sara Amon.

Translations Editor: Victoria Gaviola.

Layout & Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525 • www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1527-1021