

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

Title I Cooperative
Educational Service Unit 10

April 2010

STUDY SKILLS

Strengthen your child's memory

You watch your middle schooler spend time studying every day. But it doesn't seem to do much good—because he forgets the material the minute he shuts his textbook. To help him retain what he's learned:

- **Have him review what works.** Does he tend to forget the material when he studies with a friend? He may be better off studying alone. On the other hand, does he seem to lose focus when he studies alone? Perhaps a study partner might be the solution. Encourage your child to think about which study methods have worked best for him in the past.
- **Ask him to rephrase what he's learned.** See if he can explain the lesson he's working on using his own words. This is a good way to gauge how much he's retaining. He won't be able to do it if he isn't absorbing the information he reads.
- **Have him prioritize.** When studying, does your middle schooler get so caught up in the tiny details that he misses the big picture? Remind him to memorize the major points first. After all, it's great if he can recite every battle in the Civil War, but not if he can't recall what the conflict itself was about.



Source: "Nine Ways to Aid Your Memory," Dartmouth College Academic Skills Center, www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/docs/increase_memory.doc.

HEALTHY HABITS

Make sure fitness is a family priority

You want to spend more time with your child. Why not make that time together good for your relationship *and* your bodies? Get moving together! According to research, the average child in America:

- **Spends** less than 15 minutes doing vigorous exercise each day.
- **Spends** 20 percent of "awake time" watching TV.
- **Drinks** 20 or more ounces of soda every day.
- **Exercises** less and less as she gets older.

Don't let your middle schooler become the "average" child! Instead, commit to keeping physically fit. To stay active together:

- **Take** a walk around the block.
- **Try** a new sport together.
- **Play** a game of one-on-one basketball.
- **Take** a long bike ride through the park.

Source: "Facts on Kid's Health," Fitness for Youth, www.fitnessforyouth.umich.edu/frames/frameset_parents.html.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM

Compile all compliments

Adolescents take criticism seriously. They tend to dwell on the negative things people say. Help your child do the opposite. Suggest that she write down the compliments people give her. When she's feeling down, they'll be a nice "pick-me-up."

MAKING TIME COUNT

Help your middle schooler learn the value of money

Parents often tell children, "Money doesn't grow on trees." Here are some ways to help the message sink in:

- **Talk** with your child about money and how you make it. Explain why it's irresponsible to overspend.
- **Let** your child earn money. Nearly every child can do a few odd jobs.
- **Discuss** what your child sees and hears in the media. Help him learn how to differentiate between *needs* and *wants*.



ENCOURAGING READING



Is your child a reader?

Some children do not read many novels. But that doesn't mean they aren't readers. *All* reading has value. When your child reads:

- **Magazines**—she's reading for pleasure and interest.
- **Sports scores**—she's reading to search for information.
- **Non-fiction books**—she's practicing fluency, comprehension and vocabulary skills.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents fight spring fever?

Q: My sixth grader is already dreaming about summer vacation. How can I keep her focused during these last two months of school?

A: It's not easy to stay focused on schoolwork once the days start getting warmer and longer. Still, it's critical for your child to continue to buckle down for the remainder of the year. Here's what you can do:

- **Stay committed.** Continue to check assignments and read the handouts she brings home. Make a point of chatting with your child about school every day. Ask to see what she's working on.
- **Stick with school-year routines.** It's vital to continue with appropriate routines. This means you should continue enforcing a sensible bedtime and homework time, at least on school nights. And if you do ease up on weekends, don't abandon your routines altogether. It'll only create headaches when Sunday night rolls around.
- **Create a schedule.** Discuss your expectations and write them down. Post a schedule where your child can't miss it. If she can look at a sheet of paper and see that "study time starts at 4 o'clock every day," it will be hard for her to claim she had no idea you wanted her to start her homework after school.



PARENT QUIZ

Are you keeping your child on track?

Many middle schoolers have less than two months of school left, but there's still plenty of work to do. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you're encouraging your child to keep up with homework and assignments:

- ___ **1. Do you encourage** your child to maintain a nightly routine of homework and studying?
- ___ **2. Do you expect** your child to have homework completed before he goes out with friends, even in nice weather?
- ___ **3. Do you help** your child stay organized? A "to-do" list in a prominent place helps your child keep track of all of those end-of-year projects.
- ___ **4. Do you make sure** your child is completing his homework? Missed assignments have a negative effect on grades.
- ___ **5. Are you staying** on top of your child's progress in his classes, including staying in touch with his teachers?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are helping your child maintain his focus on work as he nears the end of year. For each *no* answer, consider that idea from the quiz.

"What we want is to see the child in pursuit of knowledge, and not knowledge in pursuit of the child."
—George Bernard Shaw

Trust is key in dealing with risky peer pressure

To ward off negative peer pressure in middle school, encourage your child to trust:

- **His instincts.** If his "inner voice" says, "No!" he should trust that message.
- **True friends.** They would never ask him to do something harmful.
- **A caring adult.** Does your child have a teacher or other adult he respects?
- **You.** Remember, your child probably won't turn to you if your first reaction is always to yell at him.

NEXT STEPS

Plan for the future now

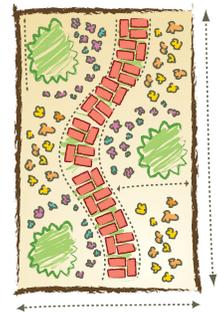
Unfortunately, fairy godmothers exist only in children's stories. Your middle schooler's dream of a great job or admission to the college of her choice after graduation will depend on her perseverance and hard work. To get her started, have her compile a list of what it takes to reach her goal, what courses she will need and any expenses involved. Planning ahead is better than waving a magic wand!

BUILDING MATH SKILLS

Math can be an everyday activity around the house

Many everyday tasks involve math. Ask your child to help you:

- **Hang up** a picture.
- **Follow** a recipe.
- **Design** a patio or garden.
- **Double-check** a bill.
- **Measure** a room.
- **Estimate** an expense.



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Published in English and Spanish, September through May.

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Editor: Jennifer McGovern.

Staff Editor: Rebecca Miyares. Writer: Erika Beasley.

Production Manager: Pat Carter.

Head of Translations: Michelle Beal-García.

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

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