

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School

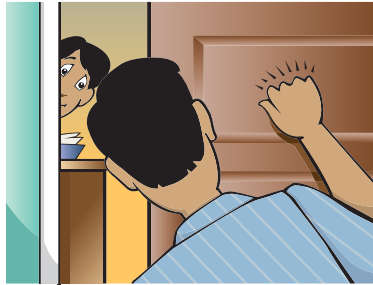
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BUILDING RESPECT

Teach respect by example

Respect isn't something parents simply teach. They must also *show* it. When you demonstrate how respect looks, you are helping your preteen become respectful himself. (Remember: *Respect* and *obedience* are different. Your preteen may obey you out of fear. Showing respect for you is healthier and more meaningful.) To demonstrate respect, be:



- **Polite.** Say *please*, *thank you* and *excuse me* when talking to your preteen. Don't barge into his room, either. Knock.
- **Kind.** Don't insult or belittle your preteen. Making a mistake doesn't mean he's "worthless" or "no good."
- **Compassionate.** Never purposely embarrass your preteen or tell jokes at his expense. If a story about him makes him cringe, stop telling it.
- **Fair.** Don't judge or punish your preteen before learning the facts. Show respect by hearing his side of the story.
- **Dependable.** If you tell your preteen you'll do something, do it. Earn his respect by proving that you're reliable. Also admit what you can't do.
- **Honest.** "Little white lies" may chip away at your preteen's respect for you. He watches what you say and do, so always try to do the right thing.
- **A leader.** When you see poor behavior on TV, talk about it. Help your teen see how disrespect can lead to bigger problems.

Source: Steve McChesney, "Respect—How to teach it and how to show it," Teach-Nology.com, www.teach-nology.com/tutorials/teaching/respect.

TALKING AND LISTENING

Get conversations going after school

Getting information out of a middle schooler can be tough. "Did you have a good day?" you ask. "Yes," your child answers. "Did you do well on your test?" "Yeah," she responds. Sound familiar? These tips will encourage her to say more:

- **Focus on *what* and *how*** instead of asking questions that can be answered with a simple *yes* or *no*. For example, "What did you learn

in math?" or, "How did your test go?" It helps to be specific.

- **Start with "Tell me"** You might say, "Tell me about your day" or, "Tell me what Mrs. Baker said about your project."

Now is a great time to practice these important conversational skills. They may be your best bet during the teen years, when kids often clam up most.

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD

Share the power of effort

Summer, when you and your child have more time to spend together, is a great opportunity to encourage activities that show how effort leads to success. Start a project together. Make a meal, paint a room, tackle a classic book. Encourage your child along the way, with phrases such as "I know you can do it. We're both learning. It's okay to make a mistake. We'll get there."

Source: "Middle School Malaise," American Psychological Association, APA Help Center, www.apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=13.

YOUR CHILD AND YOU

Get to know your child

Here's an idea for this summer: Set aside at least one evening each week as "Family Night." Cook a meal together and talk as a family. Take time to listen to your child's thoughts and ideas. Avoid watching television on "Family Night"—play board games or go for a walk instead.



ENCOURAGING WRITING

Paint a picture with words

Very often the biggest hurdle in writing is just getting those first few words down on paper. Suggest that your child use this sensory method:

- **Pretend** to actually paint something. How big is it? What color is it? What's in the background?
- **Write** it all down.

This will be the beginning of a very descriptive piece of writing.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How can parents help middle schoolers maintain friendships?

Q: I am pleased that my child made some good friends at school this year. I would like her to maintain these friendships, but her friends don't all live in our neighborhood. How can I help her stay connected over the summer?

A: Staying connected with friends may be harder now than it was when your child was younger and play dates were common. But there are ways you can bring her and her friends together. Here are some ideas:

- **Contact her friends' parents** before the end of the year. Collect phone numbers and email addresses. This information will be crucial for setting up get-togethers.
- **Host an end-of-the-year party.** Invite two or three friends and their parents over for a cookout. You will all feel more comfortable about getting your kids together later.
- **Be available.** Your child can't drive, so try to help her out when you can.
- **Drive her to a friend's house.** Or offer to pick up her friend.
- **Encourage other friendships.** Help your child cultivate relationships with kids who live nearby, too. Who knows? Maybe that girl from around the block she played with in elementary school can be her friend again.



PARENT QUIZ

Will you prevent the 'summer slide'?

Most children experience a loss of learning over summer vacation when they're not at school. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see if you will be helping your child keep his mind engaged this summer:

- ___ 1. **Will you encourage** your child to read every day?
- ___ 2. **Will you let** your child plan at least one family outing?
- ___ 3. **Will you have** your child prepare meals for the family or help with budgeting?
- ___ 4. **Will you ask** your child to keep writing, such as writing letters or long emails to family and friends?
- ___ 5. **Will you urge** your child to be active through running, swimming, walking or another outdoor sport?

How did you do? Each *yes* answer means you are planning to make this a fun and productive summer for your child. For each *no* answer, consider trying that idea from the quiz.

"All the world is a laboratory to the inquiring mind."
—Martin H. Fischer

ENCOURAGING READING

Nurture a love of reading

Reading is a vital middle-school skill that you should encourage. To keep your middle schooler's nose buried in books:

- **Make** reading a part of *your* daily life. Let your child see you leafing through magazines or choosing a thick novel over prime-time TV.
- **Never** miss a chance to share your enthusiasm for words. Did you just come across an amazing article? Share it!
- **Respect** that your child's interests are changing. If his shelf is still full of fairy tales, head to the bookstore or library.

Source: "How Parents Can Encourage Teens to Read," Reading is Fundamental, www.rif.org/parents/tips/tip.msp?View=18.

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY

Have a responsibility plan

To develop your child's responsibility before school begins in the fall:

- **Set rules—and consequences.** Don't create consequences "on the fly."
- **Assign chores, but don't nag.** If you have to do the job for her, you won't be available to take her to the mall. Let natural consequences be the teacher.

PEER PRESSURE

Prevent poor decisions

Peer pressure can influence kids to do risky things, such as smoking. But parent pressure can be effective. For example, when parents stop smoking—or simply speak out against smoking—it may help kids resist lighting up.



Source: Mayo Clinic, "Teens and Smoking: What parents can do," www.mayoclinic.com/health/teen-smoking/HQ00139.

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