

Helping Students Learn[®]

Tips Families Can Use to Help Students Do Better in School



December 2011

Montgomery Intermediate School
"Where 5th graders are our specialty!"

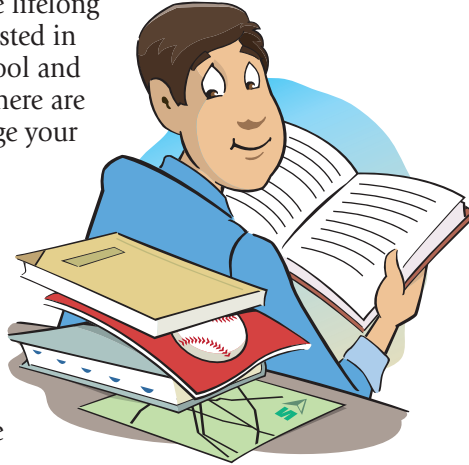
Children who enjoy reading are more likely to succeed in school

Kids who like to read tend to become lifelong learners. And students who are interested in learning are more likely to enjoy school and be successful academically. Luckily, there are simple things you can do to encourage your child's love of reading. You can:

- **Allow your child to explore.**

Whether it's a ride to the library or time on your laptop, give him opportunities to browse. If he's not sure where to start, give him a nudge. "Mrs. Smith said Jamie was talking about this really cool book yesterday. Let's see if we can find it online."

- **Surround him with words.** Of course it's important to have books around the house. But don't forget other kinds of reading materials, too. Magazines, newspapers, maps and crossword puzzles are all terrific for encouraging your child to read. And don't discount the power of the words in that video game manual, either!
- **Follow his lead.** Is your child gushing about an awesome novel he's halfway through? Ask if you can read it next. Letting him introduce you to a book he enjoys may even make him feel more grown up.
- **Get him together with like-minded kids.** See if your library or local bookstore offers a reading club for his age group. Chatting about books with his peers may make your middle schooler's own love of stories that much stronger.



Computer time can be together time

Most people use computers alone. Just for a change, sit at the computer with your child. You can do this at home or at the library. Together, you can:

- **Research** a topic, such as a new car or controversial law. Discuss your opinions.
- **Find** Internet sites that will help your child, such as a good homework help website.
- **Design** an invitation or greeting card and print it out. Add a personal note together.
- **Have** your child teach you something, such as how to use a computer game or navigate a social networking site.
- **Write** something using a word processing program. See who can find more mistakes—the two of you or the spell checker.

Source: R. Clark, D. Hawkins and B. Vachon, *The School-Savvy Parent*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Promote the use of manners

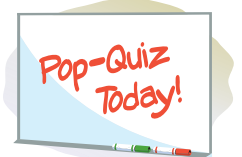
The holidays are approaching. Does your child know how to be a good guest? For example, she should:

- **Greet** the host with a friendly hello.
- **Use** *please* and *thank you*.
- **Offer** to help.
- **Be** mindful of house rules.
- **Thank** the host.

Source: A.J. Packer, *The How Rude! Handbook of Family Manners for Teens: Avoiding Strife in Family Life*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Attendance matters—even when winter break is near

Around winter vacation, it can be tempting to let your child's attendance slip just a little. You may be traveling to a relative's house and want to take your child out of school a day early. One day isn't a big deal, right? Wrong! Your child's attendance matters every day, all year long. So schedule trips and special events for when school is out of session.



Create an environment that promotes math success

Your child will do his best at math if you let him know that you think math is important, highly useful and even fun! To nurture the study of math:

- **Know** what your child is learning. Ask his teacher for more tips on helping him understand these concepts.
- **Use** practical math. For example, ask your child how much money he thinks he will need for dinner and a movie with his friends.





How can parents encourage children's responsibility?

Q: My seventh grader relies on me to remind her about assignments, gather supplies for her and tell her when it's time to study. How can I stop being her personal assistant?

A: Middle school is as much about growing up as it is about academics, so it's important that your child learn to become more responsible. Here's what you can do to help:

- **Talk to your child.** "I appreciate that you want my help with school stuff, but we need to start shifting the responsibility from me to you."
- **Create a plan together.** Think of ways for your child to be more accountable for homework. "Instead of waiting for me to remind you, let's set aside the hour before dinner for homework. When five o'clock rolls around, you'll know it's time for you to head to your desk."
- **Supply the tools.** Make sure your child has a calendar or planner where she can keep track of assignments. Tell her to let you know when school supplies run low so you can restock.
- **Give your arrangement time to work.** Your child may forget an assignment or two as she gets used to her new role, but resist the urge to swoop in and rescue her.



Are you prepared for adolescence?

The middle school years are a time of tremendous change. It's hard to be prepared for your child's rapid growth, mood swings and various needs. Answer the following questions *yes* or *no* to see how well you're coping with it all:

1. **Are you involved** with your child's education and in his life, understanding that while he may not need you to hover, he still needs you very much?
2. **Do you understand** that your child is going through many physical and emotional changes?
3. **Do you ask** your child more complex questions and speak to him on a higher level than you did when he was younger?
4. **Do you talk** to your child about peer pressure and try to meet all of his friends?
5. **Do you try** to be flexible when setting limits for your child without compromising on rules that protect his safety?

How did you do? Each yes answer means you are doing well coping with your changing child. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

"The troubles of adolescence eventually all go away—it's just like a really long, bad cold."
—Dawn Ruelas

Consequences should match children's behavior

Every time your child misbehaves, you send him to his room. Although simple penalties like this are okay sometimes, they won't *always* make an impression on your child. To help him see the error of his ways, relate the consequence to the behavior.

For example, if your child comes home late, you might say, "I was so worried and distracted waiting for you that I couldn't finish my housework. You'll have to finish it tomorrow." Then hand him a list of chores.

Source: S. Steelsmith, *Go To Your Room!* Parenting Press, Inc.,

Learning a new language requires a lot of practice

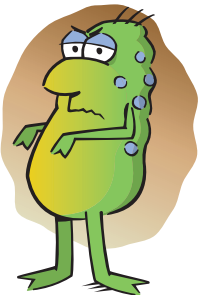
In middle school, many kids begin learning a foreign language. The two best ways to learn a foreign language are to speak it and hear it spoken. It helps to:

- **Check** the library for kids' audio and video recordings in that language.
- **Watch** a foreign language channel for few minutes each day with your child.
- **Let** your child teach you a few words from another language every day.

Fight off those winter germs

In winter, germs seem to spread more easily—especially at school. Keep your child healthy by reminding her to:

- **Wash her hands often**—before every meal, after sneezing or blowing her nose and after being outside.
- **Get a little extra sleep** at night. If she is run down, she may catch more colds.
- **Tell you** if she's feeling sick.



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

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