

# Getting the Most Out of Middle School

## Know What to Expect in Middle School

Students are usually more successful when they know what to expect. In middle school, you can expect to find the following:

### New teachers and classmates

For many students, going to middle school means going to a different, and often larger, school. For all students, middle school means new teachers, new classes, and new friends.

### New things to adjust to

Lockers, lunch periods, and changing classes are just a few of the new things that middle school students often have to adjust to.

### More activities and athletic programs

Most middle schools have a variety of activities, clubs, and athletic programs for their students.



### More independence and more responsibility

Middle school students are expected to be responsible enough to handle the additional freedoms they're given.

### Harder classes

The courses are more difficult and there's usually more homework. Students are also expected to do more work on their own.

### More social events

There are more social activities (games, dances, etc.) in middle school. Some students feel that there is also more social pressure.

### Changes in you

During middle school, students grow and change in many different ways.

"I was kind of scared going into middle school because it seemed like it was going to be a lot harder. But it's not that hard, and it's a lot more fun." John

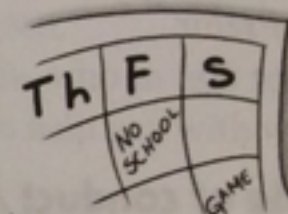


## Step One Know Your School

Make sure that you understand your school's rules and that you know where to go for help.

### School calendar

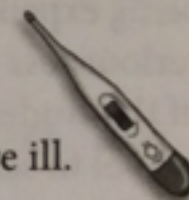
Every school has a calendar that shows when report cards come out, when each grading period begins and ends, and when their school will be closed for holidays and vacations. School calendars also show the dates when open houses, tests, and conferences are scheduled.



Get a copy of your school's calendar and write all of the important dates in your student planner. Also, put these dates on your calendar at home.

### Attendance and tardy policies

There are specific things that you need to do if you're late, or if you have to miss school because you're ill. Find out what these are.



Does a parent need to call the school? Do you need to have a note from a parent or doctor? If you're late, do you need to report to the office first? Know the answers to these questions before you are ever absent or tardy.

You are expected to be in school every day, unless you are ill. You are also expected to be on time each day. If you have a medical condition or illness that's going to cause you to miss a lot of school, have a parent call the office and explain the situation.

If you're absent for more than a couple of days, try to get some work to do at home. Call friends and classmates to find out what you've missed, or have a parent call the office to see if it's possible to get your assignments.



## Courses

In middle school, all students have to take a number of required courses (English, math, science, social studies, etc.). Sometimes students get to choose a few of their courses. For example, middle school students may be able to take band, orchestra, a foreign language, or advanced math.

Learn about the courses you're required to take each year. Also, find out if there are courses that you can choose to take. *If you ever find yourself in a course that's too difficult or too easy, talk to your counselor.*

## Code of conduct / School rules

In order to have a safe, inviting place for students to learn, schools need to have rules regarding student conduct and behavior. Most students understand that rules are necessary, and they follow them. For the students who don't follow the rules, there are consequences.

Consequences can range anywhere from getting detention to being expelled. In most cases, the consequence will depend on the seriousness of the offense and the past history of the student involved. While rules vary from school to school, no school will allow alcohol, drugs, weapons, violence, smoking, or bullying.



*"Most school rules are just common sense." Sarah*

*"Some rules may seem kind of stupid when you first hear them, but later on you'll see why they're important." Antonio*

All students need to take an active role in making their school a safe place where students want to come to learn. If you ever feel threatened, or if you know of a situation that may put you or someone else at risk, tell a teacher, principal, or counselor immediately.

Principals and teachers make rules so their school will run smoothly, and so that everyone will be safe. *It's the students, however, who make their school a great place to be!*

## People to go to for help

If you look around your school, you'll find teachers, principals, counselors, librarians, tutors, coaches, and secretaries. All of these people are there to help you have the best middle school experience possible.



At some point, you're probably going to have a question or problem that you need help with. You can usually get your questions answered and your problems taken care of just by going to the right office, or by talking to the right person.

If you ever have a problem and don't know who to talk to, see your counselor. Your counselor will be able to help you with whatever question or problem you have.

*"Many of my teachers have offered their own time to help me when I'm having trouble. If you just ask, teachers are usually happy to help you." Hannah*

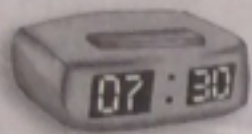
*"Last year I had a problem with a boy who was bothering me. I asked one of my teachers how to handle it, and she helped me figure out what to do." Kylie*

*"If I ever have a problem with a class or teacher, I talk to my counselor. He's really helped me out a lot." Tyrone*

*The person who can help you the most with any problem or concern is a parent. If you have a problem with a class, teacher, or another student, tell your parent(s) right away. A parent can help you deal with any situation or problem.*

*If you don't feel that you can talk to a parent, talk to another adult you trust.*





## Step Two Be In School Every Day

*To do well in school, you must have good attendance!*

When you miss school, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, homework explanations, assignments, quizzes, and tests. It doesn't matter how good you are about making up your work, you can never make up everything you miss, even if you're absent for only a day. Unless you have an extended illness or a medical condition, you shouldn't miss more than a few days of school a year.

### If you are absent from school

If you must be absent from school, remember that *you* are responsible for finding out what you missed and for getting the work made up. You are also responsible for arranging to make up any missed quizzes or tests.

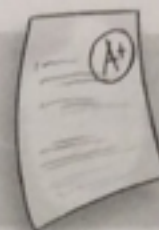
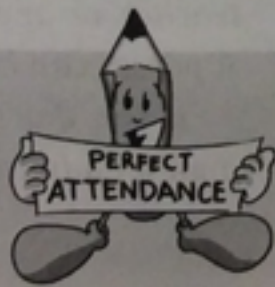
See each of your teachers before or after class to find out what you missed. Once you find out what you need to do, get everything made up as soon as possible. If you know in advance that you're going to be absent, try to get assignments ahead of time.

*"I try never to miss school. It's just such a pain to make things up." Tyler*

*"When I come back after I've missed a couple of days, I feel like I don't understand what's going on at all." Kate*

*"One of the smartest guys I know is getting Ds because he misses so much school." Marcus*

*Good attendance will not guarantee you good grades. If you have poor attendance, however, you are pretty much guaranteed to get poor grades.*



## Step Three - Know How to Get Good Grades

*If you come to school every day and do the following, you are sure to get good grades.*

### Be organized

- ▶ Use a student planner.
- ▶ Have phone numbers for classmates.
- ▶ Keep your locker and backpack neat.
- ▶ Have a separate pocket folder for each class.
- ▶ Get everything organized for the next day before you go to bed.



*"I use my student planner for everything. It helps me stay on track and get things done on time." James*

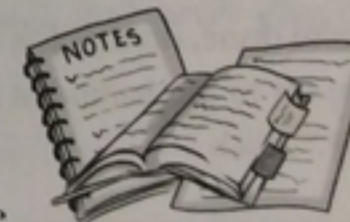
### Manage your time well

- ▶ Use any extra time in school to get started on homework.
- ▶ Have a regular time and place to study.
- ▶ Allow more time for homework than you think you'll need.

*"I make a 'to-do' list for myself each day and I check things off when they're done." Jennifer*

### Study smart

- ▶ Find a good place to study.
- ▶ Plan out your study time.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ▶ Break large assignments down into smaller parts.
- ▶ When studying for a test, be sure to go over review sheets and chapter review questions.

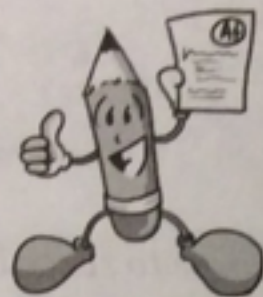


*"Before I start to study, I figure out what I need to do and what order I'm going to do it in. I always try to do the most important or the hardest thing first." Marisa*



## Be successful in the classroom

- ▶ Be in school every day, on time.
- ▶ Bring everything you need to class.
- ▶ Always do your homework.
- ▶ Participate in class.
- ▶ Treat others with respect.
- ▶ Learn how to get along with different types of teachers.
- ▶ Don't leave class with unanswered questions.
- ▶ Turn in work that's neat and easy to read.



"To get good grades, I study, I do all of my homework, and I ask questions if I don't understand something." Marcus

## Take good notes

- ▶ Listen carefully and think about what your teacher is saying.
- ▶ Write down the important information.
- ▶ Take notes that are neat and easy to read.
- ▶ If you're absent, get copies of the notes you missed.

"I go over my notes and highlight the information that's really important. It makes studying for tests a lot easier." Emily

## Know how to read a textbook

- ▶ Before you start to read, look over the headings and the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ Read the assignment all the way through.
- ▶ When you're done, do a quick review of what you've read.

"I really try not to get behind in my reading. It's just too hard to catch up." Nick

## Be a smart test taker

- ▶ Before you start, look over the entire test and develop a plan.
- ▶ Mark the questions you want to return to.
- ▶ Check your answers, and use all the time you're given.

"As soon as I get my test, I write anything I need to remember at the top." Michael

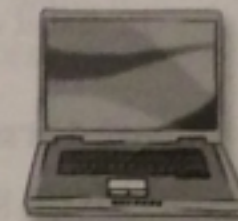
## Cheating

Some students think that it's no big deal to cheat once in awhile. But cheating *is* a big deal, and it's wrong. Cheating can also get you into a lot of trouble at school and at home.

Copying something word for word, even from the Internet, is also cheating. Be sure to always identify another person's words or ideas by using quotation marks.

## The Internet

The Internet gives you access to a tremendous amount of information. There is, however, a lot of information on the Internet that's unreliable or incorrect.



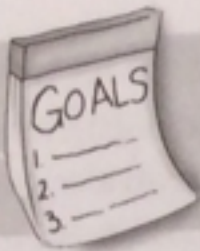
Before you use any information that you have gotten online, make sure that the information is accurate, that it's from a reliable source, and that it contains facts, not opinions.

We use the Internet for more than gathering information. We also use it to communicate with friends and for entertainment (playing games and watching videos). The Internet is a wonderful tool, but we must all use it responsibly. If you ever have a question about a site, ask a parent, teacher, or librarian.

Never put anything on Facebook or Myspace that you wouldn't want your parents or teachers to see. Also, remember that "chatting" online with someone you don't know can be dangerous. Be careful when you use the Internet, and *never* give out personal information.

*A lot of students get good grades in elementary school, but when they get to middle school, they let their grades slip. Work hard to get the best grades you can in middle school. You want to be ready for high school!*





## Step Four Set Goals

*It's important for people of all ages to have goals.*

Goals give you direction and focus. Having a goal also helps you develop a plan of action. For example, if you want to go to college, there are certain things you need to do to reach that goal. If you're not in the habit of setting goals, now is the time to start!

### Set short-term and long-term goals

Short-term goals are goals that you can achieve within days or weeks. Long-term goals are goals that will take weeks, months, or even years to achieve. Below are a few examples.

#### Examples of short-term goals:

- Get a B on my next history test
- Have all of my chores done by Friday
- Practice my soccer drills three times this week



#### Examples of long-term goals:

- Get all As and Bs on my next report card
- Make the basketball team next year
- Go to college and become a lawyer

### Set goals that are specific, measurable, and realistic

**Not specific** - I will do better in math.

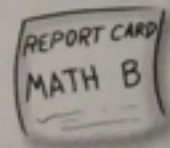
**Specific** - I will get a B in math this semester.

**Not measurable** - I won't be so shy in class.

**Measurable** - I will raise my hand at least three times today.

**Not realistic** - Even though I usually get all Cs on my report card, this semester I will get straight As.

**Realistic** - I usually get all Cs on my report card, but this semester I'm going to get Bs in at least two classes.



### Set both academic and personal goals

At the beginning of each grading period, figure out what grade you think you can earn in each class. Think of these grades as your academic goals for the term.

At the end of the grading period, congratulate yourself if you were able to meet your goals. If you didn't achieve your goals, try to figure out why. Then set new goals for the next grading period.

Be sure to also set a few personal goals for yourself. Perhaps you want to get in better shape, improve your athletic skills, or earn some money. Come up with two things you want to accomplish that don't involve grades. Make those your personal goals.

### Write it down

Once you've set a goal for yourself, write it down. Then write down the specific things you need to do to achieve your goal.



In the example below, Sophia set a goal for herself, and then she made a list of the things she needed to do to achieve her goal.

My goal is to have enough money to buy an iPod by the end of next month. To help me reach my goal, I will

- ▶ find out where I can get the best price, and then figure out how much money I need to save
- ▶ ask Mom if she has any jobs I can do to earn some money
- ▶ save all of my birthday money
- ▶ baby-sit for my aunt and save the money I earn

Successful people set goals and then work hard to achieve them. Having goals will help you become the person you want to be!

"For every class, I set a goal based on what grade I think I can get. This gives me something to work for." Chen

"I'm always setting goals for myself. For example, my new goal is to be able to run a mile in 8 minutes." Anna





## Step Five Get Involved

*Students who are involved in activities usually get better grades, and they like school more.*

All middle schools have athletic teams, clubs, and music programs. In many schools, students can also work as an office aide or teacher's assistant. Find out what activities are available at your school and become involved in one or two. You'll make new friends, gain new skills, and you'll also have a lot of fun.

If you need additional information on an activity, go to the office or talk to your counselor. Also listen to announcements and check your school's website.



### Reasons to participate in school activities

#### ► Spend time with friends and meet new people

*"Band is so much fun. We're all friends and we have a great time together." Hannah*

#### ► Try something new

*"One of my teachers told me that I should try out for the school play. It turned out to be a lot of fun, and everyone said that I was really good." Mia*

#### ► Provide a valuable service

*"I work in the office one period a day. I like working there, and I feel like I am doing something useful." Carlos*

#### ► Enjoy school more

*"I didn't like school last year, but this year I'm on the football team. I know more people now, and school's more fun." Tyler*

#### ► Become a leader

*"Being a class representative has helped me gain confidence. It's also helped me develop leadership skills." James*

#### ► Relieve stress

*"Basketball practice helps me get rid of a lot of stress. It's great to be with friends and forget about school for awhile." Kate*



#### ► Develop your skills and talents

*"I play the violin in orchestra. I'm not very good, but I'm getting better, and I'm having a really good time." Tasha*

#### ► Have fun

*"School activities are the best part of school." Sophia*

### Get involved in activities outside of school

There are lots of wonderful programs outside of school for middle school students (sports programs, YMCA programs, scouting, church activities). Middle school students can also volunteer. Volunteering at a nursing home, animal shelter, or charity event is a great way to have fun and to do something that's worthwhile.

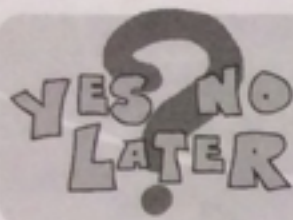
Being with friends and participating in group activities is great, but it's also important to have things that you enjoy doing by yourself. During the next few years, take time to develop some personal hobbies and skills.

Here are just a few things that you can do on your own:

*cook, read, juggle, fish, dance, shoot hoops, build something, make jewelry, take pictures, write stories, knit, draw, sew, hike, garden, start a collection (comic books, rocks, coins), play an instrument, exercise, decorate a bedroom, listen to music, take care of a pet, make a web page, help an elderly relative or neighbor*

**Find something that you love to do, and then do it!**





## Step Six - Make Good Choices and Decisions

*When you make good choices and decisions, you reap the rewards. When you make poor choices and decisions, you must accept the consequences.*

Now that you are in middle school, you're going to have more freedom and independence than you've ever had before. Of course, with greater freedom comes greater responsibility. Remember, *you* are responsible for your actions and for the choices that you make.

### Making good decisions

You will be making lots of decisions during middle school, so it's important that you have good decision-making skills. Whenever you're faced with a difficult decision, try going through these steps.

1. Figure out what your choices are.
2. Write down the positives and negatives for each choice.
3. Make sure that you have all of the information you need.
4. Think about your choices, and then make your decision.

### John's Dilemma

My older brother asked me to help him mow lawns after school, but I'd been thinking about playing baseball this spring. I couldn't decide which I wanted to do, so I got out a piece of paper, and I made a list of the positive and negative things about each choice.

#### A. Mowing Lawns - POSITIVES

1. I will be able to earn some money.
2. I will be helping my brother out.
3. My brother might give me some customers of my own.



#### Mowing Lawns - NEGATIVES

1. It's hard work.
2. I won't be able to see my friends after school.
3. My brother can be kind of bossy sometimes.

#### B. Playing Baseball - POSITIVES

1. Playing baseball is a lot of fun.
2. I'd get to be with my friends on the team after school.
3. If I get good enough, I might be able to make the high school team.



#### Playing Baseball - NEGATIVES

1. The team probably isn't going to be very good.
2. Baseball takes up more time than mowing lawns.
3. Joining the team costs \$75.

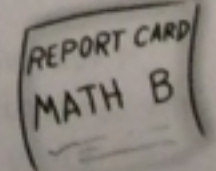
I looked at my two choices and realized that before I could make a decision, I needed to find out if my mother would pay the fee for me to play baseball.

After I found out that my mom would pay the \$75 fee, I thought about my choices, and I made my decision. I decided to play baseball.

We asked our students to tell us about some of the decisions that middle schoolers have to make. Here are a couple of their answers.

"You have to decide who your friends are going to be. Hang out with the right people, and don't give in to peer pressure." Kylie

"If you have a problem, you have to figure out what to do about it. I was having a problem with math, so I decided to get some help after school. Now I'm getting a B in math." Anna





## Making good choices

During the next few years, you'll hear a lot about smoking, drinking, drugs, and sex. Everyone knows that it's harmful and illegal for students to drink or smoke. Everyone also knows that taking drugs is both illegal and dangerous. As for relationships, middle school students should be very careful about getting into any kind of physical relationship with a member of the opposite sex.

Of course, some middle school students drink and smoke. Some do drugs, and some are sexually active. The students who are involved in these activities have made a choice, and they will have to deal with the consequences. At some point, you may have to decide whether or not you're going to participate in one or more of these activities.

Think about what activities you will, and will not, get involved in. Also, think about what you will say and do, *before* you're in a situation where you have to make a quick choice or decision. For example, you should decide that smoking is something that you're not going to do *before* someone offers you a cigarette.

Too often young people do things they normally wouldn't do just to go along with the crowd. Of course, many students later regret their actions. *Think about who you are and who you want to be - before you find yourself in a difficult situation.*

Don't ever do something that doesn't feel right, and don't ever feel that you need to explain yourself. If someone asks you to do something that you don't want to do, just say, "No, I don't think so" or "No thanks." Of course, you can also make up an excuse and just leave.



"I hear about lots of parties, but I don't go to them. My friends and I just hang out on the weekends. We don't do all that much, but we still have fun." Marisa

"I felt pressure from a friend once. But I thought about the consequences, said no, and walked away. I'm glad that I did." Emily



## Step Seven - Deal with Stress, Anger, and Bullies

*In middle school, some students feel more stressed out, and some feel like they get angry more often. Unfortunately, a few students sometimes act like bullies.*

### Dealing with stress

In middle school, the classes are usually harder, there's often more social pressure, and life is more complicated. These things sometimes cause middle school students to feel stressed. When you're feeling stressed, try these relaxation techniques.

- ▶ Take a deep breath, and then slowly release it. Do this until you feel your body relax.
- ▶ Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being there.



Whenever you are under a lot of stress, spend time with your family and friends and talk to them about what's going on. Talking is good because it helps you sort things out. Also, try to think about how you can make your life less stressful.

When you're feeling stressed, take good care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, eat right, and get some exercise. (Physical activity can actually reduce stress.) Try to keep a sense of humor, and do things that have helped you feel calm and relaxed in the past (take a hot bath, go for a walk, play with a pet).

We asked our group of students what they do to relieve stress. Here are a few of their answers:

"To relax, I read a book." Sophia

"I just listen to music." James

"Playing sports helps me relieve stress." Darius

"When I feel stressed, I play video games." John

"I go outside and take a long walk." Jennifer





## Dealing with anger

We all get angry sometimes. Some people, however, seem to get angry a lot. Sometimes people get so angry they think they're going to explode. If you ever get so angry that you don't know what to do, try doing one of the following:

- ▶ Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and slowly count to 10.
- ▶ Do something physical to get rid of the negative energy. Take a walk, shoot baskets, kick a ball, or lift weights.
- ▶ Talk to a friend, parent, or counselor.

## Dealing with bullies

In middle school, you'll probably run into some students who act like jerks. You may also see a few students who are more than jerks - they are bullies.

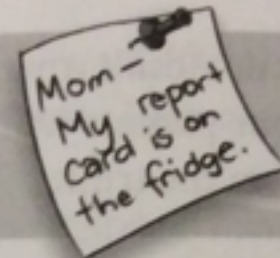
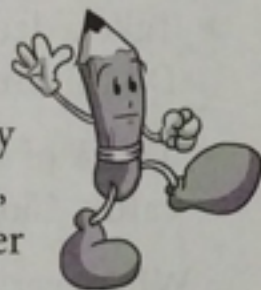
The best way to deal with a bully is to stay away from that person. A bully is looking for a reaction, so if you're ever the target of a bully, ignore him/her and just walk away.

If you are having a problem with a bully, let your friends know what's going on and ask for their support. Also, tell a parent, counselor, or teacher. If a bully is causing you problems, chances are he/she is also causing problems for other students. When you tell someone what's happening, you're not only taking action to protect yourself, you're making your school a better, safer place for everyone.

Bullies want power and they like to have an audience. Since bullies are influenced by how other people react, students can help discourage someone from being a bully. Everyone needs to let bullies know that their behavior is "not cool" and that it is not acceptable. *Students are the key to stopping bullies!*

"This guy in my class used to give me a hard time. I finally just told him to stop it. After that he left me alone." Antonio

"If you're having a problem with a bully, make sure that you let someone know about it." Brooke



## Step Eight - Get Along with Your Parents

*Getting along with your parents will make your middle school years a lot easier and a lot more fun.*

In middle school, you're going to have all sorts of new experiences and challenges. Your parents, of course, are also facing a new challenge - they are now the parents of a middle school student.

During your middle school years, you and your parents will go through different stages, and sometimes you will disagree. For example, you may want more time to hang out with your friends, more freedom, or more privacy than your parents want to give you.

While you may not always agree with your parents, if you do the ten things listed below, you and your parents will probably get along just fine during these next few years.

1. Remember that your parents care about you, and that sometimes when you're out with your friends, they worry about you.
2. Talk to your parents about what is happening in school and about what you and your friends are doing. When you talk to your parents about what's going on in your life, they're less likely to think you're hiding things from them. Even telling them little simple things can make a big difference.
3. Never be disrespectful to your parents.
4. Bring your friends home so that your parents can meet them.
5. Make a real effort to do well in school.
6. Do chores without complaining.
7. Always tell your parents where you're going and when you'll be home. Check in with them often.

HEY DAD,  
I GOT A B  
ON MY MATH  
QUIZ!



8. If you've done something wrong, don't lie about it. Admit what you've done and accept the consequences. Your parents will probably be more understanding if you tell them the truth.
9. When you and your parents disagree, first try to understand why they feel the way they do. Then, if you believe that what you want is truly reasonable, try to work things out by compromising. The following example will give you an idea of how this can work.

Taylor wanted to go to the mall with her friends from 4:00 to 9:00, but her parents said no. They said that the mall isn't safe and that there isn't anything she needs to buy.

Rather than get angry with her parents, Taylor said, "Mom and Dad, I know you worry about me, but really, we just look at the clothes and walk around. We never talk to people we don't know, and we always stay together. I promise to call you every hour to check in. If you're worried about me being there after dark, I'll be home by 8:00."

If Taylor's parents say ok, then Taylor will need to do exactly what she said she'd do. She'll need to call every hour, and she'll need to be home by 8:00.

If her parents still say no, Taylor needs to accept their decision, without getting upset. If Taylor is able to do this, her parents will be impressed with how mature she is being, and they may be more likely to say yes the next time.

10. Communicate. If there's something that you want or need, or if you have a problem, tell your parents. They aren't mind readers. You have to help them understand what you need from them.

*Hint: When you're talking to your parents, try using "I statements." For example, rather than, "You don't trust me," say "I feel like you don't trust me."*

We asked our student panel for tips on how to get along with parents. Here are some of their suggestions.

"Still do things with your parents. Ask them to help you study and do things like go shopping. Also, ask them for their opinion about things." Jennifer

"Try to put yourself in your parents' shoes. It will help you understand where they're coming from." Sarah

"Bring your friends over and introduce them to your parents. Parents feel better when they know who you're hanging out with." Tyler

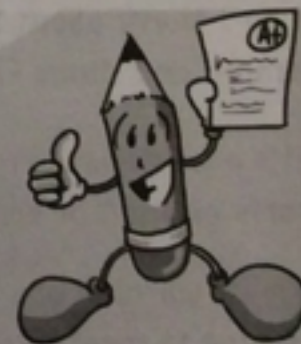
"When you go someplace, tell your parents where you're going. If you go someplace different, let them know." James

"Talk to your parents about what's going on, and keep an open mind about their ideas." Kylie

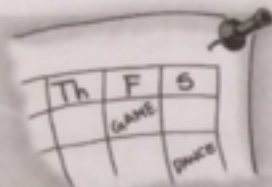
"When you disagree, try to explain yourself without getting upset or angry." Darius

"Treat your parents with respect and listen to their advice. It's amazing how often they are right." Kate

*Hint: If you do well in school, your parents are likely to be more understanding about a lot of other things. Studying hard and getting good grades pays off in lots of ways!*







## Step Nine - Understand the Social Scene

*Friendships are very important in middle school.*

Most middle school students are more interested and involved in social activities than they were in elementary school. During these years, there are parties, dances, boyfriends, girlfriends, and lots of gossip. Students care about what other students do and wear, and everyone is worried about how they look.

The middle school social scene can be exciting, crazy, and sometimes difficult to deal with. We talked to several ninth graders, and they had some excellent suggestions on how to deal with it.

*"Go out of your way to be friendly. Smile and talk to people - even to people you don't know." Carlos*

*"Find friends who have the same interests as you, and who like you for who you are." Michael*

*"Don't do something that isn't you just to be cool." Justin*

*"Having a few close friends is better than having lots of friends who don't really care about you." Marisa*

*"Be careful what you say. Once I accused a friend of something and I was wrong. I ended up losing a good friend." Tasha*

*"Don't worry about being popular, and don't get caught up in the drama and dumb fights." Sarah*

*"It's a lot easier to make friends when you're in sports or band or something." Nick*



*"Don't worry if you don't have a lot of friends right away. It takes time to meet people and make friends." Mia*

*"Don't take people too seriously, and let stuff go." Anna*



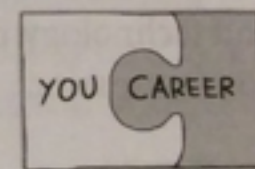
## Step Ten - Plan and Prepare for Your Future

*Middle school is a good time for you to start thinking about what kind of career you might like to have.*

Before you can begin to choose a career, there are lots of things that you need to consider. You need to think about what you're good at (abilities), what you like to do (interests), and what you have a natural talent for (aptitudes). You also need to think about what's important to you (values).

To learn about different careers, ask several adults to tell you about their career. Ask them what they like about their career, what they don't like, and how they prepared for it. Also, ask if they have any advice for someone who's considering a similar career.

Don't worry about finding the perfect career right now. Just try to identify one or two career areas that might be a good match for you and learn about the careers in those areas.



Below are seven career areas for you to think about.

### Seven Career Areas

**Business** - business manager, salesperson, secretary

**Health Care** - nurse, doctor, physical therapist

**High Tech/Computers** - engineer, computer programmer

**The Arts** - musician, artist, actor

**Education** - teacher, professor

**Human Services** - social worker, firefighter

**Skilled Trades** - auto mechanic, plumber, carpenter

*For information on a specific career, go to [www.bls.gov/ooh](http://www.bls.gov/ooh).*



## Preparing for a career

Graduation from high school is several years away; however, it's not too early to start thinking about what you want to do after you graduate. Maybe you already know what you want to do. Maybe you have no idea. Even though you don't have to make that decision right now, you should know what your choices are.

Below are six different ways that you can prepare for a great career. Remember, most careers require education or training after high school.



### High school career and technology program

Most high schools offer career and technology programs in several different career fields (e.g., carpentry, cosmetology, dental assisting, computer technology). Students in these programs spend much of their time "learning by doing." To find out about the career and technology programs available in your school district, talk to your counselor.



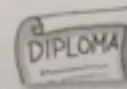
### Community or technical college

These colleges offer one and two-year programs in a variety of career areas (e.g., business, nursing, law enforcement, engineering technology, early childhood education). Students can also start at a community or technical college, and then transfer to a four-year college after a year or two.



### Four-year college

A four-year college education can open doors and provide a wide range of career choices and opportunities. Four-year colleges vary in their size, costs, and in the majors they offer. All four-year colleges, however, want students who are prepared to do college-level work. Students who want to go to a four-year college need to take college prep courses in high school and get the best grades they can.



### Career or trade school

Career and trade schools offer short-term training in many different career fields (e.g., child care, electronics, photography, auto mechanics). While some programs last only a few weeks, others take up to two years to finish.



### Military

The military trains young men and women so they can serve and protect our country. The military offers qualified applicants free job training in over 2,000 jobs. They also have a number of programs to help students pay for college.



### Apprenticeship

Apprentices learn their trade through a combination of classroom instruction and on-the-job training. Apprenticeship programs are considered by many to be the best way to get training in the skilled trades (e.g., plumbing, carpentry, electrical work).

## Fast Growing Career Fields

**Health Care** - As our population gets older, we need more people working in health care. New technology will also create new careers in the medical field.

**STEM Careers** - **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **M**ath  
Many of the fastest growing careers are in these four areas.

*If possible, job shadow someone for a day.  
It's a great way to find out what a career is like.*

*Discover who you are. Get involved in lots of different activities, develop your skills and abilities, and try new things!*





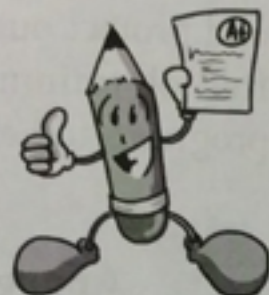
## Tips for Students

We asked our student panel what advice they would give to middle school students. Below are some of their answers.

"Try to be nice to everyone. If you do this, you'll have a ton of friends." John

"Take your grades seriously, but don't let your life revolve around getting As." Justin

"Focus on your schoolwork. If you don't understand something, ask for help." Brooke



"Always do your best and set goals for yourself." Carlos

"Don't be too hard on yourself. Everyone does stupid things in middle school - just forget about it and move on." Sophia

"Get involved in activities, even if you don't think you're that good. You don't have to be good at something to have fun." Ryan

"Don't be upset if some of your old friends start hanging out with new people. Everyone makes new friends in middle school." Mia

"Be organized. It will save you a lot of time." Kate

"Don't follow the crowd - people will like you better if you're not afraid to be you." Darius

"Keep up on all of your assignments. If you do, you'll probably get decent grades." Chen

"Have fun - middle school goes really fast." Tyler



## Tips for Parents

Middle school is a time of change, and most students go through several stages and lots of ups and downs. The tips below will help you guide and advise your middle school student.

- ▶ At the beginning of each grading period, help your child set realistic academic goals.
- ▶ Encourage your child to get involved in school activities. Show your support by attending performances and games.
- ▶ Make sure your child knows that you expect him/her to be in school, on time, every day.

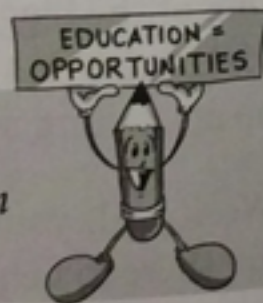
Realize that it is your child's responsibility to follow the rules, get homework done, and prepare for tests.

- ▶ Attend open houses and parent conferences. Also, regularly check your school's website for information and updates.
- ▶ Know the dates that midterm grades and report cards come out. If you don't see a report card, call the school and request a copy. If your child's grades are accessible online, check them often.
- ▶ One of the biggest challenges for students is being organized. Make sure that your child has a system for recording assignments, taking notes, and keeping his/her backpack organized.
- ▶ Work with your school. Teachers, counselors, and principals are there to help your child get the best education possible.
- ▶ Make sure that your child isn't spending too much time online, on the phone, or watching TV. Set limits.
- ▶ Look for opportunities to praise good grades and extra effort.



- ▶ Talk to your child about what's happening in school and be a good listener. If your son or daughter says something about school that concerns you, remember that what you are hearing is from your child's perspective. If you have a question or concern, contact the school by phone or e-mail.
- ▶ Explain to your child that you'll be checking on where he/she is going, and with whom. When children know their parents are checking on them, they're less likely to do things they shouldn't.
- ▶ If you suspect that your child is drinking or using drugs, talk to your son or daughter immediately. If you need help or advice, talk to your child's counselor or to your family doctor.
- ▶ Whenever possible, help your child figure out how to take care of problems on his/her own. Your child will gain confidence and become more independent. If your child is unable to resolve an issue, or if there's a serious problem, be available to intervene.
- ▶ If you are trying to change a behavior, first make sure that your child knows what your expectations are. You can then offer rewards if your expectations are met, and/or consequences if they're not. Never take away a positive activity (e.g., sports, choir, scouting) as a consequence.
- ▶ Put the computer in a common space, discuss Internet safety, use parental control software, and learn about the technology your child is using.

*Make school a top priority. Nothing is more important to your child's future than education.*



*If you're concerned about your child's academic performance, talk to your child's counselor. A school counselor is an excellent resource for parents, as well as for students.*

We asked our panel of students what advice they would give to the parents of middle school students. Below are some of their responses.

*"Listen, ask questions, and let your children know that they can talk to you." Jennifer*

*"Encourage your kids to get involved in sports, clubs, or something. They'll like school a lot more." Justin*



*"Don't be overprotective, but do ask where your kids are going, what they'll be doing, and who they'll be with." Carlos*

*"Make sure that you know how your kids are doing in school, but don't pressure them too much, and don't nag." Kate*

*"Middle school is a new experience. Give your children a chance to figure things out for themselves." Kylie*

*"These years are hard, so cut your kids some breaks. Don't let them be disrespectful though." Tyrone*

*"Be supportive and be patient." Nick*

*"Understand that there is a lot of pressure being put on us in school and that sometimes we make mistakes. Help your kids learn from their mistakes." Sarah*

*"Allow your kids to go out and have fun with their friends, but tell them when to be home, and make them check in." Anna*



*"Go to your child's games or concerts or whatever. Sometimes we act like we don't care if you go, but we do." John*