

# Teachers' Learning Secrets to Use at Home



**Y**ou are still your child's most influential teacher. It's normal for middle school children to try to push parents away. They want to assert their independence. But your child needs your support and guidance now more than ever.

Middle school students need parents' help in learning to study and making the most of their school time. But how can you encourage your child to study? What can you do at home to improve your child's skills in reading ... or writing ... or math? Here are some teachers' learning secrets you can use at home.

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## Children Learn with Different Strategies

**W**hen it comes to helping children learn, there's no such thing as "one size fits all." Encourage your child to use a variety of strategies. For example:

### Visual

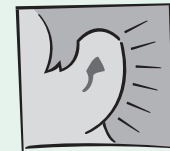


In some subjects, your middle schooler might be more successful if he can see what he's learning. He could:

- Write out and post important words and concepts.
- Put up a map of a region he is studying.
- Make a time line of important dates.
- Create flash cards to study vocabulary words for English or a foreign language.
- Draw a picture or diagram of what he's trying to learn.

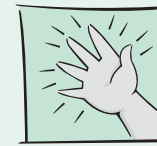
### Auditory

Auditory learning uses a listening strategy. Sometimes it helps to:



- Make up poems, rhymes or other memory cues. For example, "My very excellent mother just served us noodles." That's a way to remember the planets starting from the sun (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune).
- Read important lessons aloud.
- Check out audio books from your public library.
- Record study notes of anything your child needs to memorize. She can then play them back for review.

### Kinesthetic



This is a great strategy to use if your middle schooler is tired of sitting still and feels like his brain is going to sleep. Encourage him to:

- Move around while studying.
- Try reading while standing up.
- Act out a lesson from history.

In fact, most middle schoolers use a combination of all these methods of learning. So, encourage your child to try various strategies when he studies. The right way is the way that proves to be most successful for each subject.



## Ask Thought-Provoking Questions

**T**ry asking lots of questions, but make it fun. They should be thought-provoking and stimulating. Be sure to avoid questions that can be answered with a simple *yes* or *no*.

Ask: "What was the most interesting thing you did in school today?" "What was the best question you asked today?" "What do you think will be on the next math test?" "If you were the teacher, what important elements would you emphasize in the novel you are reading?" You'll know your middle schooler is thinking when she starts asking you good questions, too.

## Establish Routines

**T**eachers know that students want—and need—routines. Studies show that families of successful middle schoolers have well-established routines.

Repetition helps middle schoolers learn to organize their world. It helps to:

- **Have a set time and place** for your middle schooler to study.
- **Give your child responsibility** for some household chores.
- **Establish a regular bedtime** for your child. It is important for your middle schooler to get enough sleep.
- **Reserve some special times** to spend with your child, too. Have a regular family popcorn or pizza night. Or spend one weekend afternoon each month doing something together outdoors.



## Tips for Tutoring Your Middle Schooler

**T**utoring your own child can be difficult. Middle schoolers can be overly sensitive and stubborn. Parents can get impatient. Here are some secrets of success from teachers that will make helping your child easier for both of you:

- **Open the lines of communication.** Point out that you know your child is doing fine in simple equations, for example, but that the teacher says he needs extra help in graphing. Say you want to help and ask if that's okay.
- **Sit next to your child**, rather than across from him.
- **Give directions slowly.** Your child's difficulty may be with following directions.
- **Work through one step and one problem at a time.**
- **Look at each other when you talk.** It's easier to see confusion than it is to hear it.
- **Don't ignore problems.** You want your child to develop the habit of confronting challenges.
- **Don't get discouraged** if your child does.
- **Minimize the use of negative phrases**, such as "That's wrong." Just restate the question and give your child more clues to help him get the answer.
- **Switch places.** Ask your child to be the teacher and explain the subject to you. As he teaches you, he'll be learning, too.



## Meet Your 'Partners'

**P**arents and teachers should be partners in helping students learn. If you haven't met your child's teachers, set up an appointment soon. Ask teachers for suggestions of things you can do at home to help your child. You can make more of a difference than you may think!

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