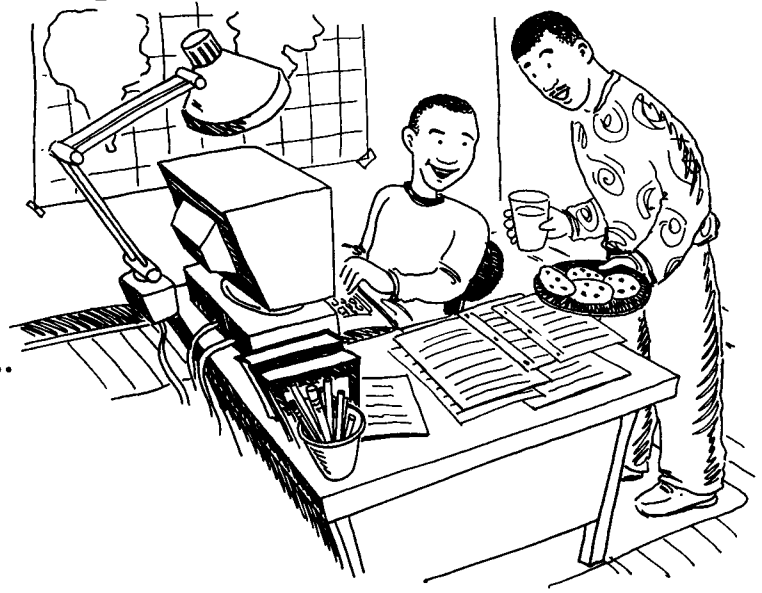


Super Study Skills

“But I already studied!” How often have you heard your middle grader say that, after maybe 10 minutes of studying? Teaching your child ways to study that are fun and effective will help her now and for her lifetime.

Share the following methods to put your middle grader on the road to studying—and succeeding!

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Organization

Before your child can begin studying, she needs to be organized. Here's how you can help:

- Designate a place for studying. Your middle grader may prefer sitting in a quiet corner of the kitchen or sprawling on the floor in her room. The important thing is to have a place that has “Study here” written all over it. This means a clutter-free surface, good lighting, a comfortable place to sit, and a computer (if available). Have reference materials handy, such as a dictionary, a thesaurus, a foreign language dictionary, and U.S. and world maps. *Tip:* Keep distractions to a minimum. Switch off the television, turn music down, and keep siblings from playing nearby.
- Put a stocked supply box in the study area. In addition to pencils, pens, and notebook paper, supplies should include colored highlighters, a ruler, scissors, glue, Scotch tape, a calculator, a compass, and graph paper.
- Encourage your middle grader to write quiz, test, and project due dates on a calendar. Every Monday, have her write down what is due each day of that week. Help her divide the work to be done into small, manageable blocks, and set goals for each day. *Example:* Study vocabulary words on Monday and review history notes on Tuesday for Wednesday's quizzes.



Concentration

When your middle grader learns how to concentrate, he has won half the battle. Use these suggestions to strengthen your child's concentration skills:

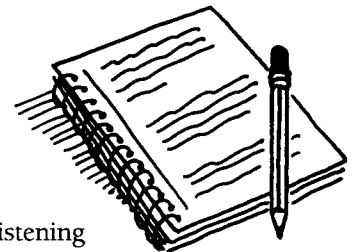
- Many children have trouble focusing with an empty stomach. Before your youngster begins studying, give him a healthy,

energy-boosting snack that includes both protein and carbohydrates. Try peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, fruit smoothies, or English muffin pizzas.

- Is your middle grader the most focused when she gets home from school, or is she more attentive after dinner? To find out, vary her study times for a week, and keep track of how long it takes her to finish her assignments. Then, choose a study time based on what works best for her.
- Getting the most difficult work done first can give your child a sense of accomplishment that will help him get through the rest. For example, suggest that he work on a creative-writing assignment before studying his list of science terms. *Hint:* He will be freshest when he first sits down to work.

Note taking

When your child reaches middle school, it becomes even more important for her to have good note-taking skills. Have her try these ideas:



- While reading a chapter or listening to a teacher, write down the main ideas. Jot down keywords, and fill in the details later.
- Leave room between your notes so you can add more information as you study or reread the material.
- Use “shorthand” to save time during note taking. *Examples:* “w/” for “with,” “o” for “over,” “bc” for “because,” “b4” for “before.”

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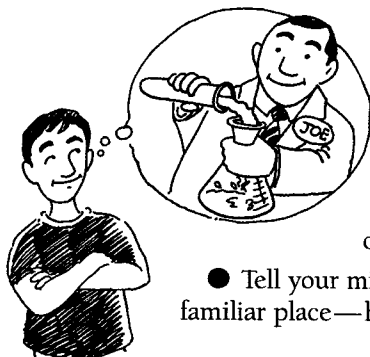


- Write question marks next to anything you don't understand. Look up the answers at home using a dictionary, your textbook, or the Internet, or ask the teacher the next day.

Reading comprehension

Successful studying starts with good reading. Here are some ways your youngster can better absorb what he reads:

- Stop and summarize. Have your child close the book after each paragraph or page and say what happened in his own words.
- Write it down. At the end of a chapter or a section, ask your middle grader to write down the names of the characters and something to remember them by (Thomas, the brave soldier); the setting (the beach at Normandy); and a sentence or two summarizing what happened (The soldiers landed before dawn. When the assault began, Thomas's best friend was hit, and Thomas carried him to safety).
- Compare it. Help your child relate what she reads to something familiar. *Example:* "The setting of the book is England, where your cousin's family lives."



Memorization

For some materials, memorization is the key to studying. Teach your child these tricks of the trade:

- Tell your middle grader to visualize a familiar place—his house, his room, or the

refrigerator—and put each thing he needs to remember in that place. *Example:* To remember the human body's skeletal system, he could imagine placing each bone in a refrigerator. The cranium goes on the top freezer shelf, the vertebrae on the bottom freezer shelf, the clavicle in the icemaker, the ribs on the top refrigerator shelf, and so on. Have him draw a diagram of his "refrigerator skeleton."

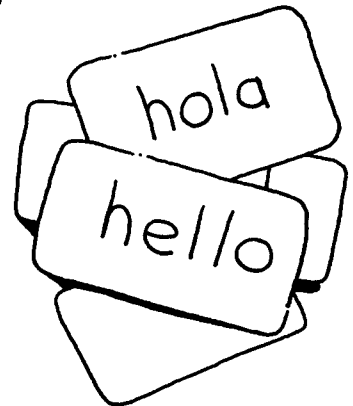
- To help memorize names, suggest that your child invent relationships within a sentence. If she's studying the Renaissance, she could say, "Michael was an angel(o) who helped me paint the room," "Florence grew up in Italy," and "Sir Thomas knew Moore about treating all men equally."
- Your middle grader can make connections between the ideas he has to remember by creating a simple story. Suppose he needs to remember the steps of a science experiment. He can make up a story: Joe had a *question*, so he created a *hypothesis* to answer his question. He designed a *procedure* for figuring out the answer. When he had his *results*, he came to his *conclusion*.

Tip: Encourage your child to make a list of her memory tricks. Writing them will help her remember—and she'll have a study sheet to use.

Tips for tests

Share these ideas to help your middle grader study for her next test:

- Make flash cards for foreign language words. For example, put a French word on one side of an index card and the English word on the other side.
- Create time lines for historical facts.
- Have a parent or older brother or sister quiz you. Make sure they mix up the order of the questions each time.
- Ask the teacher for extra copies of classroom worksheets, and do them again for practice.
- Make up your own quiz, and then take it.
- Organize a study group with two or three of your classmates.



Middle Years