It’s a big jump from elementary to middle school. Not only will your child have multiple classes and teachers, he’ll probably have more homework, papers, and books. Being organized can help him cope with these changes like a pro.

Share these suggestions with your middle grader.

**Do a ‘run through.’** Have him think through his day. What will he need for each class? Help him decide what to carry and to plan times to trade books and notebooks at his locker. At the end of each day, he should check his assignments so he knows what to take home.

**Avoid clutter.** Encourage your middle schooler to weed out what he doesn’t need by sorting papers and supplies every Friday, so he’s ready for the week ahead. Then, he can group old assignments, quizzes, and tests together for safekeeping.

**Have a daily plan.** Using a dry-erase board or an agenda book can help your child stay on top of how he spends his time. Suggest that he plan each day of the week with slots for school, studying, and other commitments (debate team, sports practice). If he doesn’t have some time to relax, he may need to cut back on something.

Note: Let your middle grader know that it’s okay to change his strategies until he finds the one that works best for him.

**Organized for success**

**Be involved**

You can help your child improve her grades and have a better attitude toward school simply by staying involved. Here are some ideas.

**At home:**
- Provide transportation when necessary. For instance, your middle grader may need to go to the library to do research or to a friend’s house to work on a project.
- Talk about what you’re learning (a new computer system at work, vegetarian cooking). You’ll show her that learning is a lifelong process.

**At school:**
- Check the office for ways to volunteer. You might chaperone a field trip, help stock a parent-resource center, or set up or clean up after club events.
- Attend activities. Even if your child isn’t involved in the winter musical, for example, show your support by going as a family.

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**Character challenge**

Make family members aware of good character by challenging them to be “character scouts.” Ask everyone to be on the lookout for traits like gratitude and courage (saying “thank you” for a small act: facing fears to try new activities), and point them out. **Idea:** Choose a trait to find each week.

**Foreign-language tip**

Is your middle schooler studying a foreign language? Encourage him to watch movies in the language he’s learning (he can find them at the library or on movie channels). He can also play games online. For example, at www.languagegames.org, he can play Hangman and do crossword puzzles and word searches in another language.

**Shifting moods**

Tweens often go through ups and downs because of changing hormones. When your child seems out of sorts, that’s when she most needs you to remain calm. Showing you have control will comfort her and make her feel secure, even if she doesn’t realize it at the time.

**Worth quoting**

“The fragrance always stays in the hand that gives the rose.” Hada Bejar

**Just for fun**

Q: Why are bulldogs so wrinkled?
A: It’s too difficult to iron them.

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Create your own shorthand
It will be easier to keep up with what a teacher says if you use abbreviations and symbols. You might leave out the vowels in words (“btwn” for “between”) and use abbreviations such as “b/c” for “because” or symbols like “&” for “and.” Find suggestions online by Googling “note-taking shorthand.” One helpful site is www.english-zone.com/study/symbols.html.

Fill in what’s missing
If you don’t hear a key word or point, ask the teacher to repeat it. You can do this during the lecture, since other students may also need it repeated, or after class. Or you could compare notes with a classmate.

The rundown on rumors
Your middle schooler has probably overheard people telling a rumor about someone. Tell her that this is wrong—and that she can help stop the rumor mill.

Start by explaining that rumors are often untrue or greatly exaggerated. What starts out as a fairly insignificant comment can quickly get blown out of proportion as it spreads from one person to another.

When your child hears a rumor, she should ask herself if it could damage someone’s reputation. Would she want people saying similar things about her? If not, she shouldn’t repeat it.

Instead, suggest that she find a reason to excuse herself (“I have to get to class”) or change the subject (“What did you think of the science quiz?”).

O U R  P U R P O S E

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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