

# SEVENTH GRADE

## Parent Guidebook



SEVENTH

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# Dear Parent

Welcome to seventh grade! This is a very exciting time for your child, and for you. Your seventh grader is growing and becoming more independent and self-sufficient every day; however, your support and guidance continue to be very important.

This book provides the information you need to help your seventh grader not only succeed academically, but to also thrive and grow. With your involvement and support, your child is sure to have a great year!



We know that many children are being raised by grandparents or guardians. For the sake of simplicity, the term “parent” refers to any primary caregiver.

# Seventh Grade Parent Guidebook

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# School Success

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**It's important for your child to be successful in his/her classes and to feel competent and capable. Here's how you can help your seventh grader succeed in school.**

## Improve organizational skills

Many seventh graders need help with organization. *This is one area in which parents can really make a difference!* Use these tips and suggestions to help your child get organized.

- ▶ Encourage your child to use a student planner or assignment notebook to keep track of assignments. Check it periodically to make sure your child is using it correctly.
- ▶ See that your student has a folder, binder, or notebook that's clearly labeled for each class. Create a file at home for the papers you and your child want to keep.
- ▶ Remind your seventh grader to put all papers, handouts, and assignments in the appropriate folder or binder—never stuck inside books or stuffed into a backpack. Encourage your child to clean out his/her locker and backpack each week.
- ▶ Large assignments can sometimes seem overwhelming. Show your seventh grader how to break large assignments and projects down into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- ▶ Help your child establish routines that include getting everything ready for the next day before going to bed, getting to bed at a reasonable hour, and getting up early enough to eat a good breakfast and get to school on time.

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## Be involved

Check your school's website regularly and participate in school events and activities (e.g., open houses, parent meetings, parent-teacher conferences). If your child is having a problem with a class, talk to the teacher. If your child is having problems with several classes, or if there's anything else that's affecting his/her success in school, arrange a meeting with your child's school counselor.

## Provide homework support

Some students like to get their homework done right after school. Others prefer to take a break and do their homework later. Help your child determine the best time to do homework, and create a study plan together.

Expect your child to do homework independently, but be available to help if your child is stuck or wants you to look over an essay, listen to a speech, or help study for a test. However, don't provide more help than is wanted, and never do the work yourself. If something doesn't get done, don't automatically come to the rescue. If you do, your child won't feel the need to be responsible in the future.

## Monitor progress

Regularly talk to your child about how his/her classes are going. Make sure you see all interim/midterm reports and report cards, and if your school posts grades online, check them regularly.

If you don't see a midterm report or report card, call the school and ask for a copy. *Do not just assume someone will contact you if there's a problem.* Remember, if there is a problem, the earlier it's addressed, the better.

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# Growing Up: Seventh Grade

**Middle school students can challenge even the most patient parents. It is, however, easier to be understanding and supportive when you consider the many changes these students are experiencing.**

## Physical growth

Students change a great deal physically during middle school. Because students mature at such different rates, seventh graders come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes.

With growing bodies and emerging hormones, middle schoolers sometimes feel tired and just plain cranky. The onset of puberty can also make students feel self-conscious or embarrassed about how they look. Different parts of their bodies often grow and change at different times and at different rates. A young person's arms, legs, or nose, for example, may suddenly seem out of proportion. Of course, these changes all happen at a time when students are very concerned about their appearance. To support your seventh grader through this time of change, look for ways to help your child feel good about him/herself.

### Help develop a positive self-image

- ▶ Reassure your child that the changes he/she is experiencing are normal.
- ▶ Teach your child about personal hygiene and monitor grooming habits.
- ▶ Help your child choose clothes that are flattering and in style. If your tastes and your child's tastes differ, perhaps "pick your battles," and let your child have more control over his/her appearance—within reason.



## Emotional growth

Seventh graders are often moody. From hour to hour, they're up, down, happy, sad, confused. These shifts in mood are the normal result of the changes in their bodies, and of their need to figure out who they are and how they fit into this complicated middle school world.

Be patient with your child, even when emotions and attitudes are running high. Make time for fun family activities, keep a sense of humor, and most importantly, give your child lots of encouragement, love, and support.

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## Intellectual growth

Middle schoolers are ready to explore and learn about life. They have a strong sense of what's fair, and they like to think they can make a difference. They are also able to think more abstractly and handle more complex intellectual tasks.

Parents can help their children develop intellectually by discussing serious topics with them, by giving them opportunities to express their opinions, and by showing respect for their ideas.

As a way to exchange interesting articles, thoughts, and ideas, you might want to start (and monitor) an email account for your child. Email can also provide you with a way to address difficult issues—and emails and text messages give your child an easy way to share his/her thoughts and feelings with you as well.



# The Social Scene

**Friends are very important to seventh graders, however, dealing with the middle school social scene isn't always easy.**

**Here's how you can help your child navigate this important aspect of middle school.**

## Provide support

*A strong support system is the key to helping your child cope with changing social circles and increased pressure to fit in.*

**Maintain family activities.** While being with friends is important to middle schoolers, doing things with their parents and families provides them with a much needed sense of security.

Spend one-on-one time with your child, plan family outings, and eat dinner as a family as often as possible. During dinner, turn off the TV, silence all phones, and talk about your day.

**Build self-esteem.** Students with a positive self-image are less influenced by peer pressure and less affected by social concerns. Help your child find something he/she is good at and enjoys: a sport, a musical instrument, art, etc. Encourage your child to pursue and develop his/her interests and talents.



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## Discuss tough issues

*Help your child deal with difficult social situations.*

**Peer pressure.** Seventh graders are trying to find their own identity, yet they don't want to be different. Because "fitting in" is so important, they are often susceptible to peer pressure. Talk to your child about peer pressure and make sure your child knows that he/she doesn't need to change to be liked. Devise a plan and have a phrase your child can use to navigate out of difficult situations.

**Drugs and alcohol.** Be informed about what's happening in your school and community, and find teachable moments to talk to your child about the dangers of alcohol, drugs, smoking, and vaping. Make sure your child knows where you stand on these issues—and that there will be consequences for their use.

## Set limits

*Seventh graders need to have clear rules and limits regarding social activities.*

- ▶ When your child leaves the house, know who he/she is going to be with, where they are going, and what they'll be doing. Be specific and consistent about curfews and rules (and the consequences for breaking them).
- ▶ Base the amount of freedom your child is given on how responsible he/she is. Teens need to understand that they will be held accountable for their actions and behavior.



## Promote independence

If your seventh grader has a question or problem, try to help your child figure out how to take care of it on his/her own. Being able to get their questions answered and their problems solved helps students gain confidence, and it gives them a sense of empowerment.

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# Communicating with Your Child

**Communicating with children this age can be challenging at times. But because it's so important, parents need to make the extra effort.**

**Timing is important.** Be available to listen when your child wants to talk. Find times when your teen is most likely to be open to conversation (e.g., after getting home from school or before going to bed). A particularly good time to talk is when you're driving in the car. It's quiet, no one can leave, and you're already spending the time together.

**Tell your child what you want done (instead of what you don't want done).** For example, instead of, *"Don't leave your backpack on the floor"* say, *"Please put your backpack in your room."*

**Ask open-ended questions that require more than one word answers.** Instead of asking *"How was school?"* say, *"Tell me about your day,"* or ask *"What's that book about?"*

**Don't feel that you need to fix every problem.** Young people often just want someone to listen—not solve their problems for them. And remember, this is a time when students need to develop their problem-solving skills.

**Recognize your child's concerns.** Something that may seem like a small thing to you could be a big thing to your seventh grader. If your child has a concern or problem, listen attentively, and help him/her figure out how to deal with it and move forward.

**Know that your child hears you. Seventh graders may act like they don't hear what their parents say, but they do listen.**



## Nonverbal communication

Make time for one-on-one activities. It's often easier to talk to your child when you're doing something you both enjoy, such as cooking, watching a game, or going out for ice cream.

Make it easy for your teen to talk to you, but know that just because your child doesn't say anything doesn't mean that he/she has nothing to say.

Children aren't always able to put into words what they need you to know. Nonverbal communication is therefore often just as important as what's said.

- ▶ Be aware of your child's eating and sleeping patterns. Too much or too little of either may indicate that your child is troubled by something.
- ▶ Pay attention to your child's body language and moods. These can be good indicators of how things are going at school and with friends.

*Listen to your instincts. If you think something is wrong, talk to your child about your concerns—or try sending your child an email or text message expressing your support and openness to talking.*

## Be available

Always be available to talk to your seventh grader, and make sure your child knows that he/she can talk to you about anything, anytime, without fear of punishment or judgment.

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# Technology



**Technology is everywhere today. Your child has access to all kinds of images and information – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

**While this access opens up many wonderful doors, the explosion of technology and social media presents new challenges.**

**Help your child enjoy the benefits of technology, while minimizing the risks.**

## Discuss appropriate uses

- ▶ Discuss what information is appropriate and inappropriate to view and share on social media sites.
- ▶ Remind your child that people online may not be who they say they are, and to never share personal information online (e.g., phone number, address, school, favorite hangout).
- ▶ Make sure your child understands that when a message or photo is sent, *it becomes permanent*. This means that somebody will always have access to what you send—and it can always be recovered.
- ▶ Discuss the importance of being respectful and kind to others online. Remind your child that others can't see your facial expression or hear your tone of voice online, so messages can easily be misunderstood.

## Provide structure and set limits

- ▶ If left on their own, many young people will spend hours online and with their tech toys. Have an open dialogue about how much time your child can spend using technology and how much time he/she feels is fair—but be comfortable knowing that you have the final say.
- ▶ Know what devices and apps your child is using. Insist on transparency.
- ▶ Require that all devices be silenced and put away during dinner and family times. To ensure that your child isn't on the phone late at night, consider requiring that all phones be plugged in for recharging in a central location (e.g., your bedroom) each night.
- ▶ Make sure your child knows that tech toys and online games are a privilege that can be enjoyed only if he/she meets your standards at home and at school.

## Monitor use

- ▶ If you're checking up on your child, it's best to be honest about it. Explain that you're not trying to "destroy their fun," but because there's a lot of stuff on the internet that can sneakily do harm, you're just trying to keep them safe.
- ▶ Ask questions, such as, "What sorts of things do you post online?" "Are you using privacy settings?" and "Can you show me the apps you use?"
- ▶ Know what kinds of music, videos, and TV shows your child is listening to and watching. For reviews and age ratings on movies, games, and more, visit [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org).
- ▶ Consider creating a technology/internet contract that spells out how you expect your child to use the internet and his/her cell phone. You can find sample contracts online or create your own.



For additional information on internet safety, visit [www.netsmartz.org](http://www.netsmartz.org) and [www.commonsensemedia.org](http://www.commonsensemedia.org).

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# Bullying

**Students, parents, and schools need to work together to help make their school bully-free.**

## What you can do

- ▶ Teach your child to respect others and to be tolerant of those with different opinions, beliefs, and backgrounds.
- ▶ If your child witnesses bullying at school, encourage him/her to report the incident to a teacher, counselor, or principal.
- ▶ Bullies often target students who are passive or quiet. Encourage your child to stand tall, walk confidently, look people in the eye, and use body language that shows self-confidence.
- ▶ If your child tells you he/she is being harassed or bullied, have him/her explain what has happened, who was involved, and when, where, and how often it occurred. Make printouts of anything that's been sent or posted online.
- ▶ Be aware. If you notice any of the following, ask your child if someone is causing problems for him/her at school or online.
  - ▶ suddenly more anxious, quiet, insecure, or withdrawn
  - ▶ drop in grades
  - ▶ not wanting to go to school
  - ▶ loss of appetite or complaints of illness
- ▶ If you learn that your child has been harassing others, take it seriously and don't make excuses. (Even good kids sometimes behave badly.) Discuss the possible effects of his/her behavior, and hold your child accountable.

## Be there for your child

When children are bullied in school or online, it's critical that parents listen to them, believe them, and empower them.

# Career & College

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**It's never too early to start talking about your child's future. Here's how you can help your child start exploring career and education options.**

## Identify abilities and interests

As a parent, you know your child better than anyone. You can, therefore, be an invaluable resource in helping your child identify career-related interests, talents, strengths, and values.

Help your child see how his/her personality traits and abilities can be valuable assets in the right career. Remember, there are many talents that aren't measured in school (e.g., the ability to work with people, leadership abilities, creativity). Also discuss the various ways people prepare for their careers (e.g., 4-year college, 2-year college, career school) and start exploring those options as well.



## In Closing

Helping your child have a successful year doesn't require doing extraordinary things. It's the little things you do every day that provide the guidance and support your child needs.

With your encouragement, love, and support, your child is sure to be successful this year, and in the years to come.

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**Information, tips, and advice  
for parents of seventh grade students.**

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