

Welcome to

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Resources to help you get middle school off to a great start

WELCOME TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

Welcome to middle school! Middle school is a wonderful, exciting adventure! New people. New opportunities. New challenges. And a lot more responsibility. If you develop good habits and work hard in your classes, you're sure to have a great year!

Here are some things you can expect in middle school.

New classes

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

More independence and responsibility

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

More activities and sports

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

While more is expected of you in middle school, know that you have what it takes to succeed in your classes and have an awesome year!



VIDEO

For the top 10 habits of successful middle schoolers, watch this quick video!

GET OFF TO A GREAT START

What you do now will set you up for success in middle school, high school, and beyond. Here are some tips for succeeding now and in the future.

Have routines

Have a morning routine that gets your day off to a good start—and a nighttime routine that includes getting everything ready for the next day before you go to bed.

Get organized

Use a planner to record assignments, tests, quizzes, activities, and appointments. Make to-do lists and cross things off as you complete them.

Do all of your homework

Doing your homework helps you stay on track, and it's often a big part of your final grade.

Study smart

Create a daily homework plan. Decide what you need to get done and the order in which you're going to do it. Break large assignments into smaller, more manageable parts.

Ask teachers for help

If you don't understand something in class, talk to your teacher. Don't risk falling behind! Most teachers are happy to help, but you have to ask.

Try new things

Try a new sport or activity. This is how you find out what you enjoy, what you're good at, and what interests you want to pursue.

Set goals

Goals give you direction, focus, and purpose. Set some academic and personal goals to work toward.

TOP
10

REASONS TO BE IN SCHOOL EVERY DAY

1. Better grades.

The better your attendance, the higher your grades.



2. Less stress. When you miss school, you have lots of assignments to make up. That's stressful.

3. You learn more. Learning a little every day in class is much better than having to learn everything you missed on your own.

4. More likely to graduate. Students who have poor attendance are less likely to graduate.

5. Time with friends. When you're at school, you get to spend time with friends (and make new ones).



6. Good habits.

You'll develop good habits for success—like showing up every day and being on time.



To learn more, watch this video!

VIDEO

7. Mentors. Your school is full of people who can offer you advice and guidance, like your teachers and counselor. If you aren't at school, you don't have the chance to develop relationships with the people who are there to help and support you.

8. Preparation for your future.

The knowledge you gain and the skills you develop in school will help you be successful throughout your life.



9. Personal development. The more you're in school, the more you learn. And the more you learn, the more intelligent, interesting, and capable you become.



10. Pride. When you're succeeding in your classes, your parents and teachers are proud of you. But most importantly, you feel proud of yourself—and that's a great feeling!

Next

Step

Middle

School

Info & Tips for
New Middle
Schoolers

Dear Middle Schooler

Middle school is an exciting new adventure. Everything is new and different, bigger and better. As a middle school student, you will have more freedom, more independence, and more fun. But you'll also have more responsibilities—in school and in life!

But don't worry. If you follow the advice in this booklet, go with the flow, and aren't afraid to reach out for help, you'll do great. You've got this!





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What to expect

Whenever you start something new, it's helpful to know what to expect. Here are some things you can expect to find in middle school.

New teachers and classmates

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



New things to adjust to

Lunch periods, lockers, and changing classes are just a few of the new things most middle schoolers need to adjust to.

New classes

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

More activities and sports

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

More things to organize

In middle school, students have more classes, more teachers, and more homework. To keep up with everything, you need to be organized.

More socializing

There are more games and social events in middle school. Some students also feel that there's more social pressure.

Set some goals

There's no better time to set goals for yourself than at the beginning of a new school year. Set some academic and personal goals for yourself.

Set short-term and long-term goals

Short-term goals take hours or days to achieve. Long-term goals take weeks, months, or even years to achieve.

Examples of short-term goals:

- ▶ Get a B on my next history test
- ▶ Practice my soccer drills 3 times this week

Examples of long-term goals:

- ▶ Get all As and Bs on my next report card
- ▶ Make the soccer team next year
- ▶ Go to college

Make 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 three times today.

Not realistic – I usually get all Cs on my report card, but 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 two Bs.



Get organized

Being organized saves you time and helps your day run more smoothly. When you're organized, you also have less stress, and you feel more in control of your life.

Use a planner every day

Use your planner to record assignments, tests, appointments, activities, and anything else you need to remember.

Organize your papers

Whether you use folders, binders, or notebooks, the important thing is that you have a specific place for all of your papers (notes, handouts, homework, and returned tests).

Keep your backpack and locker clean

You'll be able to quickly find what you need, and you'll be less likely to lose things.



Eliminate clutter

Put away or throw out anything you don't need.

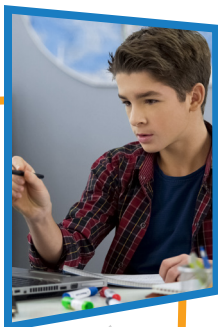
Organize and save computer work

Make sure you save your work often. Regularly back up, clean up, and organize your computer files.

Prepare for your day the night before

Before you go to bed, get everything ready for the next day. Put your backpack and anything else you will need in the same place each night. If there's something you want to remember to do in the morning, leave yourself a note or set a reminder.

Manage your time



With good time-management skills, you will have time for the things you *need* to do—and for the things you *want* to do.

Use class time wisely

Use any extra time in class to start on your homework, and if you have a study hall, use it. Doing these things will reduce the amount of time you need to spend on homework at night.

Make to-do lists

Each day, make a list of all the things you need to do and cross things off as you complete them. At the end of each day, add the tasks that didn't get done to the next day's to-do list.

Combine tasks

Study while you're doing laundry, go over a speech in your head when you're going for a walk, or review your notes while you're waiting for a ride.

Create routines

Have a morning routine that includes eating breakfast and getting to school on time—and a nighttime routine that includes going to bed early enough to get 8–9 hours of sleep.

Limit time wasters

Social media, TV, and video games are fun, but they can easily take up too much of your time. Schedule small chunks of time for these activities, and stick to your schedule. You could also use one of your favorite activities as a reward for getting your schoolwork done.

Succeed in class

When you make the most of the time you spend in class, the time goes faster, you have less work to do outside of class, and you get better grades. Here is some advice to help make this happen.

Participate in class

Participating in class makes the class more interesting, and it helps keep your mind focused. Ask and answer questions, and participate in discussions. You'll learn more, and your teachers will be impressed.

Have your homework done

In many classes, homework is a significant portion of your final grade. Also, if you haven't read the short story that was assigned in English, you aren't going to get nearly as much out of the class discussion—and it might be bit stressful if your teacher calls on you.

Know your teachers

Different teachers have different rules, requirements, and pet peeves. Think about what's important to your teachers. Are they strict about rules? Do they give points for participation?

Ask for help

Teachers are usually happy to help you, but you have to ask. If you're struggling in a class, get help early.



To succeed in your classes you need to be a good test taker. For tips on how to ace your tests, watch this short video.

Study smart

Students who “study smart” often spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades. Here’s how you can “study smart.”

Get started

Getting started on your studying is often the hardest part. Set a time to start studying and stick to it. If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or with a subject you like.

Have a good place to study

Your study area should be quiet, comfortable, well-lit, and equipped with supplies—paper, pens, pencils, calculator. *To help you stay focused, turn off the TV and silence your phone.*



Create a study plan

Before you begin studying, decide exactly what you want to get done and the order in which you are going to do it. Be specific. For example: 1) do science report, 2) read history pages 51–70, 3) revise language arts paper.

Break large assignments down

Use a planner to break large assignments down into smaller parts. For example, if you have a paper due Friday:

Mon – create outline

Wed – revise and rewrite

Tues – write first draft

Thurs – write final report



Watch this short video for some additional tips on how to get the most out of your study time.

Navigate the social scene

For lots of middle school students, making friends and having a fun social life is very important. However, for many students, the social scene can be complicated.

Making friends

In middle school, “fitting in” and having a group of friends can feel really important. Here are some tips for building happy and healthy friendships.

Be open. Most friendships grow from everyday circumstances, like sitting next to someone on the bus or being in the same class. Strike up a conversation with a question or compliment like, “Who do you have for English?” or “I really like your shoes.”

Look for like-minded students. Pay attention to what other students are interested in, and if you have something in common, talk to them about it. Also, take notice of students who seem to be like you. If you happen to be quiet or shy, and another student seems to also be shy, introduce yourself.

Shyness can seem like a big problem to overcome, and it can make you feel lonely. Just know that all middle school students have fears, anxieties, and doubts. Once you get used to speaking up, it gets a lot easier.



Romantic relationships

Relationships at this age should be fun and casual, not serious or intense. If someone you like is possessive or gets in the way of your schoolwork, friends, or family obligations, this is a good sign that you should back away.

Stand up to bullying



Bullying is aggressive behavior that is harmful, intentional, and repeated. Bullying can take many forms—all of them are hurtful.

Types of bullying

- ▶ **physical bullying:** pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, stealing or damaging one's property
- ▶ **verbal bullying:** making insulting or embarrassing comments, teasing, or calling people names
- ▶ **social bullying:** spreading rumors, lies, or gossip
- ▶ **cyberbullying:** using technology to bully someone

If you witness bullying...

Speak up and tell the bully to stop. You can also ask the person being bullied to come with you, then walk away together. If you feel uncomfortable speaking up, do not give the bully an audience. Later, find the student who was bullied and offer your support. Report any bullying incident you see to a teacher, counselor, or trusted adult.

Support your classmates

You can help make your school bully free by supporting your classmates and doing what you can to make other students feel accepted. Just making eye contact, giving a friendly smile, and saying "hi" can help someone feel like they belong.

If you are ever bullied, know that it's not your fault. Tell a parent or other trusted adult what's happening. Also tell your friends. Do not let anyone bully you into silence.

Make good choices

Being in middle school generally means that you have more freedom and independence. But with this new freedom comes responsibility. You are responsible for your behavior, your choices, and your decisions.

Think before you act

There are countless opportunities to do great things in middle school, like get on the honor roll, play a sport, or be an officer in a club. But there are also many opportunities to make poor choices. This is why it's important to think before you act.

When you're in a situation that requires you to make a decision, ask yourself:

Is this the right thing to do?

Is this a safe thing to do?

Will I feel good about myself if I do this?



If the answer to any of these questions is *no*, then what you are about to do will likely have negative consequences for you. It's time to take a step back and reconsider.

It can be hard to focus on consequences when you're in a high-pressure situation. The excitement of a situation and/or pressure from peers can sometimes drive young people to act without considering the consequences. *This is why taking a few seconds to ask yourself the three questions above is so important.*

Your peers can be a huge influence on who you are now and who you will become. This is why it's important for you to be aware of the influence your peers have on you. Just remember to stick to your values and always think for yourself.

Be smart with technology

While technology can add a great deal to your life, it can also have some negative effects—especially on things that truly matter, like your relationships and your future.

Think before you post

To others, your posts online lack context and largely speak for themselves—so choose what you post carefully.

Be extra polite to people online. People can't see your expression or hear your tone of voice, so what you post or send can easily be misunderstood.

Remember that permanent means permanent. Somebody will always have access to what you've sent or posted, and it can always be recovered. Only send or post things you feel comfortable with people seeing forever.

Be safe

Don't put personal information (such as school, address, or favorite hangout) online. And never meet face-to-face with someone you've met online.

Take time to unplug

Research shows that spending too much time online can have a negative effect on the mental health of young people. *Take time to relax and do fun activities without technology.* You will experience the best moments of your life when you are out in the world with others—appreciating all of the challenges and triumphs that come your way.



Take care of your mental health

Mental health refers to your social, emotional, and psychological well-being. Although your mental health can be impacted by things you can't control, you can control how well you look after it.

Take care of your physical health

The amount of sleep you get, your diet, and how much you exercise all impact your mood. Make sure that you get at least eight hours of sleep each night. Also, try to eat a healthy diet and do something physical on a regular basis.

Reflect

Put your phone away, turn off the TV, and take time every day to rest, relax, and reflect. Try writing your thoughts in a journal, or just close your eyes and visualize being in a peaceful place.



Be grateful

Notice the things you are thankful for in your everyday life. Regularly reflect on and feel grateful for each of these things.

Talk about it

Talking about your feelings is a great way to process them, and to put things in perspective. Talk to a friend or family member when you have a problem or if something is bothering you.

Deal with stress

Make a list of the things that stress you out and come up with a plan to deal with each of them. If something is out of your control, let it go.

Know where to go for help

Middle school provides many opportunities, but it also brings new challenges. It's important to remember that you're not alone. If you have a problem, *someone can help*.

At some point this year, you'll likely find yourself feeling a little lost, confused, overwhelmed, or just plain stressed out. This is when it's important to do the responsible thing and communicate your feelings and needs.

If you...

- ▶ are having problems with a class—talk to your teacher.
- ▶ aren't feeling well or have lost something—go to the office.
- ▶ need help with a personal problem, are having trouble in your classes, or just aren't sure where else to go—see your counselor.
- ▶ are being bullied or harassed at school or online—tell a parent, teacher, counselor, or principal.

The person who can help you the most...

The person who can help you the most with any problem or concern is a parent. If you're having a problem with a class, teacher, or another student, tell a parent right away. If you can't talk to a parent, reach out to another adult you trust.



Never stay silent when you're struggling—there's always someone who can help you find your way.

Next

Step

Middle

School

Info & Tips for
New Middle
Schoolers

This book is filled with
expert advice on how
you can have an
awesome first year
of middle school!

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Item 121

Ready for

MIDDLE

SCHOOL

Activities to help
you get middle
school started
off right

Get to know your school

To get middle school off to a good start, learn as much as you can about your school. From attendance policies to where you can go for help, there's a lot you need to know.

The basics

- ▶ What are your school colors? _____
- ▶ What is your school mascot? _____
- ▶ Have you been to your school's website? yes no
- ▶ Do you know the rules you need to follow? yes no
- ▶ Do you understand your school's dress code? yes no

Rules and policies

- ▶ What do you do if you're absent or late? _____

- ▶ What do you do if you have to leave early? _____

- ▶ Can you see your grades online? If so, where? _____

Where to go for help

- ▶ Your counselor's name _____
- ▶ How do you make an appointment with your counselor? _____

- ▶ Your homeroom/advisory teacher's name _____
- ▶ Your principal's name _____

Think about your skills

In middle school, you have more work to do and a lot more to keep track of. Having good academic skills will help you do well in your classes, and earn the grades you want.

The most successful students do each of the following things well. How do you measure up? Put a check mark in the column that best describes how strong your skills are.

	Very good	OK	Not great
Organization	_____	_____	_____
Managing your time	_____	_____	_____
Class participation	_____	_____	_____
Homework	_____	_____	_____
Taking notes	_____	_____	_____
Taking tests	_____	_____	_____

► Which one of these areas do you want to improve the most? _____

► What can you do to improve it? _____

Being in school every day is very important in middle school. The more school you miss, the harder it is to succeed in your classes. How would you describe your school attendance up to now?

almost perfect very good fair bad

► If you marked "fair" or "bad" how can you improve your attendance?

Get involved

Middle school isn't just about academics. It's also about making friends, developing new skills, and expanding your horizons. The best way to do this is to get involved in activities.

Reasons to get involved

There are lots of great reasons to get involved and participate in activities this year. Draw a line from each Student Quote to the matching Reason to Participate.

Student Quote

"I'd never been in a play before, but it turned out to be a lot of fun."

Lucia

"I work in the office one period a day. I like helping them out." Tyler

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

"Being a class representative has helped me gain confidence and leadership skills." James

"I play the flute in the band and I'm getting better all the time." Tasha

"Basketball practice helps me get rid of a lot of stress. It's great to forget about school for awhile." Jasmine

"I didn't like school last year, but now I'm on the soccer team, and I like school a lot more." Carlos

Reason to Participate

spend time with friends

become a leader

try something new

provide a service

relieve stress

enjoy school more

develop your skills and talents

Make good choices

In middle school, you have more freedom. You also get to make more of your own choices and decisions. Remember, YOU are responsible for your actions and the choices you make.

What would you do?

Read each situation and circle the choice you would make.

1. You are walking down the hall at school with several classmates. One of them starts making fun of another student. What do you do?
 - A) laugh and be glad they aren't making fun of you
 - B) keep quiet and just keep walking
 - C) stand up for the other student
2. You are at a store with a friend and he takes a candy bar without paying. What do you do?
 - A) No one is looking, so you take one too.
 - B) Pretend you didn't see him take it.
 - C) Tell him to put it back.
3. While out with your friends, someone dares you to take a hit of a vape. What do you do?
 - A) Wanting to be cool, you agree to try it.
 - B) You take the vape, but pass it to someone else without trying it.
 - C) Say "No thanks," and start talking about something else.

Scoring – Give yourself 0 points for every A answer, 1 point for every B answer, and 2 points for every C answer. Total your points. _____

5–6 points – Good for you! You know how to think for yourself and you aren't afraid to say and do what's right.

2–4 points – You're on the right track. Try taking a stand more often.

0–1 points – Work on thinking for yourself and not letting your friends influence your decisions.

Stand up to bullying

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, hurtful, and repeated. Making your school bully free needs to be a team effort, and everyone must do their part.

Types of bullying

There are four main types of bullying: physical, emotional, social, and cyberbullying. Read each statement and decide whether it's true or false.

True

False

Physical bullying

1. Examples of physical bullying include hitting, shoving, kicking, and elbowing.

2. Hazing is a form of bullying.

3. Witnesses shouldn't get involved.

Emotional/social bullying

4. Leaving someone out of a group is an example of social bullying.

5. Students who get called names usually deserve it.

6. Saying something mean or embarrassing isn't bullying if it's true.

Cyberbullying

7. If someone threatens you by text, email, or on social media, you should delete it right away.

8. Cyberbullying is often done anonymously.

9. Cyberbullying can be very harmful, even though no one is physically hurt.

What are some things you can do if you see a classmate being bullied?

1. true 2. true 3. false 4. true 5. false 6. false 7. false 8. true 9. true

Make new friends

Having friends makes coming to school a lot more interesting and fun. Friends like you for who you are, and they are there to help you when you need it.

New friends

Having friends is really important, and middle school is a great time to develop new friendships. Here are a few tips to help you make some new friends this year.

- ▶ Go out of your way to talk to the students in your classes, those you see at lunch, and the students who are in the same activities as you.
- ▶ Smile and be friendly. If you're shy, push yourself a little. Try acting as if you're more outgoing than you feel.
- ▶ Join something. It's easier to make friends when you're part of a group or involved in an activity.

What makes a good friend?

Friendships aren't always easy and fun. Sometimes friendships can be stressful—or even harmful. How do you know if someone's friendship is making your life better or worse?

Check the box that shows the kind of friend each statement describes.

1. someone with whom you can share your true feelings without fear of being judged
2. someone who pressures you to do things you don't want to do
3. someone who actively listens to you
4. someone you feel comfortable being yourself around
5. someone who talks badly about other friends behind their backs

Good friend Not a good friend

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Take care of your mental health

Mental health refers to your social, emotional, and psychological well-being. Middle school can sometimes be stressful, but there are lots of things you can do to reduce stress and feel more relaxed.

Take care of your mind and body

Get eight hours of sleep, eat healthy, and get regular exercise.

Do you get enough sleep each night? yes sometimes hardly ever

How healthy is your diet? very healthy just ok not great

Are you physically active? yes sometimes hardly ever

Take time for yourself

Do something that has made you feel calm or happy in the past. Listen to music, go for a walk, play with a pet, or spend time in nature.

What do you do when you want to relax and feel calm? _____

Breathe

If you're ever feeling anxious or stressed, just breathe. Close your eyes, relax your body, and imagine a relaxing scene—adding as many details as you can. Breathe in deeply, count to four, and exhale. Repeat several times. **Try it now!**

Get support

Confide in others when you have a problem or are feeling stressed. Whether it's a friend, family member, spiritual leader, or counselor, it's much healthier to share your concerns than it is to go it alone.

Who can you talk to when you are feeling stressed or have a problem?

