

Getting The

Most

Out Of

Middle School

Junior High



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Dear Student,

Middle school is a wonderful, exciting adventure. Everything is new and different, bigger and better. As a middle school student, you will have more freedom, more independence, and more fun.

This booklet will tell you exactly what you need to do to be successful in school. If you follow the 10 steps presented in this book, you're sure to have a great middle school experience!

We asked several eighth grade students how to get the most out of middle school. You'll find quotes from these students throughout this book. They have some excellent tips and advice for you!

For the sake of simplicity, the term "middle school" is used in this book to refer to all junior high schools, middle schools, and intermediate schools.

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Know What to Expect

Students are usually more successful when they know what to expect. In middle school, you can expect to find the following:

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 classmates, new teachers, and new classes.

New things to adjust to

Lockers, lunch periods, and changing classes are just a few of the new things you may have to adjust to.

More activities and athletic programs

Most middle schools have a variety of activities, clubs, and athletic programs for you to join.

More independence and more responsibility

You're expected to be responsible enough to handle the additional freedoms you're given.

Harder classes

The courses are more difficult, there's more homework, and you're expected to do more work on your own.



More social events

There are more social activities (games, dances, etc.) in middle school. Some students feel that there's also more social pressure.

Changes in you

During middle school, you'll grow and change in many different ways.

"I was kind of scared going into middle school because I thought it was going to be a lot harder. But it's not hard, and it's a lot more fun." John



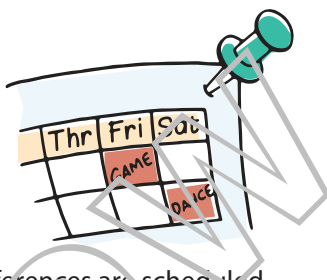
Step 1

Know Your School

Make sure you understand your school's rules and know where to go for help.

School calendar

Every school has a calendar that shows when each grading period begins and ends, and when school will be closed for holidays and vacations. School calendars also show when open houses, tests, and conferences are scheduled.



Get a copy of your school's calendar and write all of the important dates in your student planner. Share these dates with your parent(s), and make sure they're put on your calendar at home.

Attendance and tardy policies

There are specific things you need to do if you are ever late or absent. Find out what these are.

- ▶ Does a parent need to call the school?
- ▶ Do you need to have a note from a parent or doctor?
- ▶ If you're late, do you need to report to the office first?

Know the answers to these questions before you're absent or tardy.

You are expected to be in school every day, unless you are ill. You're also expected to be on time each day. If you have a medical condition or illness that's going to cause you to miss a lot of school, have a parent call the office and explain the situation.

If you're absent for more than a day or two, try to get some schoolwork to do at home. If your teachers post assignments online, it should be easy to find out what you need to do. If they don't, contact classmates to find out what you've missed, or have a parent call the office to see if it's possible to get your assignments.

Courses

While middle school student schedules are mostly made up of required courses (English, math, science, social studies, etc.), students in middle school often get to choose a few of their courses. For example, you may be able to take band, orchestra, advanced math, or a foreign language.

Know what courses you're required to take each year, and learn about any courses you can choose to take. *If you're ever in a course that's too difficult or too easy, talk to your counselor.*

Code of conduct / School rules

In order to have a safe, inviting place for students to learn, schools have rules regarding student conduct and behavior. Most students understand that rules are necessary, and they follow them. For the students who don't follow the rules, there are consequences.

Consequences can range anywhere from getting detention to suspension to being expelled. In most cases, the consequence will depend on the seriousness of the offense and the student's past history. Rules vary from school to school, but no school will allow alcohol, drugs, weapons, violence, smoking, or bullying.

"Most school rules are just common sense." Sarah

"School rules are no big deal. Just follow them." Antonio

All students need to take an active role in making their school a safe place where students want to come to learn. If you ever feel threatened or know of a situation that may put you or someone else at risk, tell a counselor, teacher, or principal immediately.

It's the students...

Principals and teachers make rules in order to create a safe learning environment. But it's the students who make their school a great place to be!



People who can help

If you look around your school, you'll find teachers, principals, counselors, librarians, tutors, coaches, and secretaries. All of these people are there to help you have the best middle school experience possible.



At some point, you're probably going to have a question or problem that you need help with. You can usually get your questions answered and your problems taken care of just by going to the right office, or by talking to the right person.

If you ever have a problem and don't know who to talk to, see your counselor. Your counselor will be able to help you with whatever question or problem you have.

"Many of my teachers took extra time to help me when I didn't understand something. Most teachers are happy to help—you just have to ask." Hannah

"If I ever have a problem with a class or teacher, I talk to my counselor. He's really helped me out a lot." Tyrone

"Last year I had a problem with a boy who was bothering me. I asked one of my teachers how to handle it, and she helped me figure out what to do." Kylie



The best person to help you

The person who can help you the most with any problem or concern is a parent. If you have a problem with a class, teacher, or another student, tell your mom or dad right away. A parent can help you deal with any situation or problem.

If you don't feel that you can talk to a parent, talk to another adult you trust.



Step 2 - Be In School Every Day

To do well in school, you must have good attendance!

When you miss school, you miss lectures, notes, class discussions, homework explanations, assignments, quizzes, and tests. It doesn't matter how good you are about making up your work, you can never make up everything you miss, even if you're absent for only one day. Unless you have an extended illness or a medical condition, you shouldn't miss more than a few days of school a year.

If you are absent from school...

If you must be absent from school, remember that **you** are responsible for finding out what you've missed. You're also responsible for getting the work made up, and arranging to make up any missed quizzes or tests.

Teachers are busy during class, so talk to each of your teachers before or after class to find out what you missed. Once you know what you need to do, get everything done as soon as possible. If you know in advance that you're going to be absent, try to get assignments ahead of time.

"I try to never miss school. It's such a pain to make things up." Jack

"When I come back after I've missed a couple of days, I feel like I don't understand what's going on at all." Tyler

"One of the smartest guys I know is getting Ds because he misses so much school." Kate



Attendance is the #1 school success factor

Good attendance will not guarantee you good grades. But if you have poor attendance, you're pretty much guaranteed to get poor grades.



Step 3 - Know How to Get Good Grades

If you come to school every day and do the following, you're sure to get good grades.

Be organized

Being organized makes your day run smoother and it saves you time.

- ▶ Use a student planner.
- ▶ Keep your locker and backpack neat.
- ▶ Use folders and binders to keep papers organized.
- ▶ Get everything ready for the next day before you go to bed.

"Using a planner helps me get things done on time so that I'm not turning assignments in late." John



Manage your time well

With good time management, you have less stress and more free time.

- ▶ Use any extra time in school to get started on homework.
- ▶ Have a regular time and place to study.
- ▶ Allow more time for homework than you think you'll need.

"I make To Do lists and check things off when they're done." Jenna

Study smart

Students who study smart spend less time studying and yet they get better grades.

- ▶ Find a quiet place to study.
- ▶ Plan out your study time.
- ▶ Focus on one thing at a time.
- ▶ Divide big projects up, and do a little each day.
- ▶ When studying for a test, be sure to go over review sheets, chapter review questions, and your class notes.



"Before I start to study, I figure out what I need to do and what order I'm going to do it in." Marisa

Be successful in the classroom

When you pay attention in class, you have less to learn on your own.

- ▶ Be in school every day, on time.
- ▶ Bring everything you need to class.
- ▶ Always do your homework.
- ▶ Participate in class.
- ▶ Learn how to get along with different types of teachers.



"To get good grades, I pay attention in class and I do all of my homework. I also ask for help if I don't understand something." Marcus

Take good notes

Having good notes to study from will help you do better on tests.

- ▶ Listen carefully, think about what your teacher is saying, and write down the important information.
- ▶ Take notes that are neat and easy to read.

"I go over my notes and highlight the information that's most important. It makes studying for tests a lot easier." Emily

Know how to read a textbook

To help you remember what you read, go through these three steps.

- ▶ **SURVEY.** Before you start to read, look over the headings and the words in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ **READ.** Read the entire assignment.
- ▶ **REVIEW.** When you're done, do a quick review of what you've read.

"I really try not to get behind in my reading. It's just too hard to catch up." Nick

Be a smart test taker

Using a few test-taking strategies will help you get better test grades.

- ▶ Before you start, look over the entire test and make a plan.
- ▶ Mark the questions you want to come back to.
- ▶ Check your answers, and use all of the time you're given.

"As soon as I get my test, I write anything I need to remember at the top of the page." Michael

Cheating

Some students think that it's no big deal to cheat once in awhile. But cheating *is* a big deal, and it's wrong. Cheating can also get you into a lot of trouble at school and at home.

Copying something word for word, even from the internet, is also cheating. It's called "plagiarism." Be sure to always identify another person's words or ideas by using quotation marks.

The internet

The internet gives you access to a tremendous amount of information. But there's a lot of information on the internet that's outdated, unreliable, or incorrect.



Your teachers may suggest good websites—they may even have links on their teacher sites. When using other websites, make sure the source is reliable, and that the information is accurate.

Of course, we use the internet for more than gathering information. We also use it to communicate with friends and for entertainment. The internet is a wonderful tool, but you need to use it responsibly. If you ever have a question about a website or blog, ask a parent, teacher, or librarian.

Never post anything on a social networking site that you wouldn't want your parents or teachers to see. Once something is posted, you can't get it back. Also, remember that "chatting" online with someone you don't know can be dangerous. *Never* give out personal information such as your name, address, or phone number.

Keep your grades up

Lots of students get good grades in elementary school, but when they get to middle school, they let their grades slip. Work hard to get the best grades you can in middle school. You want to be ready for high school!



Step 4 Set Goals

It's important for people of all ages to set goals.

Goals give you direction, focus, and purpose. Goals can also help you develop a plan of action. For example, if you want to go to college, there are certain things you need to do to reach that goal. *If you're not in the habit of setting goals, now is the time to start!*

Set short-term and long-term goals

Short-term goals are ones you can achieve within days or weeks. Long-term goals may take weeks, months, or even years to achieve. Here are a few examples.

Jason's short-term goals:

- Get a B on my next history test
- Have all of my chores done by Friday
- Practice my soccer drills three times this week

Jason's long-term goals:

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



Make your goals 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 at least three times today.

Not realistic – Even though I usually get all Cs on my report card, 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 Bs in at least two classes.

Set both academic and personal goals

At the beginning of each grading period, figure out what grade you think you can earn in each class. Think of these grades as your academic goals for the term.

At the end of the grading period, congratulate yourself if you met your goals. If you didn't achieve your goals, try to figure out why. Then set new goals for the next grading period.

Be sure to also set a few personal goals for yourself. Perhaps you want to get in better shape, improve your athletic skills, or earn some money. Come up with two things you want to accomplish that don't involve grades. Make those your personal goals.

Write it down

Once you've set a goal for yourself, write it down. Then write down the specific things you need to do to achieve your goal.

In the example below, Sophia set a goal, and then listed what she needed to do to achieve it.

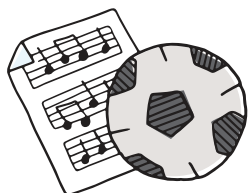
Sophia's Goal

My goal is to have enough money to buy a new phone in three months. To help me reach my goal, I will:

- ▶ *find out where I can get the best price, and then figure out how much money I need to save*
- ▶ *ask Mom if she has any jobs I can do to earn some money*
- ▶ *save all of my birthday and babysitting money*
- ▶ *spend less money on snacks and junk food*



Successful people set goals and then work hard to achieve them.
Having goals will help you become the person you want to be!



Step 5 Get Involved

Students who are involved in activities usually get better grades, and they like school more.

All middle schools have athletic teams, clubs, and music programs. In many schools, students can also work as an office aide or teacher's assistant. Find out what activities are available at your school and become involved in one or two. You'll make new friends, gain new skills, and you'll probably also have a lot of fun.

If you need additional information on an activity, go to the office or talk to your counselor. Also listen to announcements and check your school's website.

Reasons to participate in school activities

Spent time with friends and meet new people

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

Try something new

"My English teacher told me that I should try out for the school play. It turned out to be a lot of fun, and everyone said that I was really good." Mia

Provide a valuable service

"I work in the office one period a day. I like working there, and I feel like I am doing something useful." James



Become a leader

"Being a class representative has helped me gain confidence and develop some leadership skills." Carlos

Enjoy school more

"I didn't like school last year, but this year I'm on the football team. I know more kids now, and school's more fun." Tyler

Relieve stress

"Basketball practice helps me get rid of a lot of stress. It's great to be with friends and forget about school for awhile." Kate



Develop your skills and talents

"I play the violin in orchestra. I'm not very good, but I'm getting better, and I'm having a really good time." Jayla

Have fun

"School activities are the best part of school." Whitney

Get involved in activities outside of school

There are lots of wonderful programs outside of school for students your age (sports programs, scouting, church activities, etc.). You can also volunteer. Volunteering at a nursing home, animal shelter, or charity event is a great way to have fun and to do something worthwhile.

Find things to do on your own

Being with friends and participating in group activities is great, but it's also important to have things that you enjoy doing by yourself. During the next few years, take time to develop some personal hobbies.

Things you can do on your own

cook, read, juggle, fish, dance, shoot hoops, build something, make jewelry, take pictures, write stories, knit, draw, sew, hike, garden, start a collection, play an instrument, exercise, decorate a bedroom, listen to music, take care of a pet, create a web page, help an elderly relative or neighbor



Step 6 - Make Good Choices and Decisions

When you make good choices and decisions, you reap the rewards. When you make poor choices and decisions, you must accept the consequences.

Now that you're in middle school, you're going to have more freedom and independence than you've ever had before. Of course, with greater freedom comes greater responsibility. Remember, **you** are responsible for your actions and for the choices you make.

How to make good decisions

You make lots of decisions in middle school, so it's important that you have good decision-making skills. Whenever you're faced with a difficult decision, try going through these steps:

1. Figure out what your choices are.
2. Write down the positives and negatives for each choice.
3. Make sure you have all of the information you need.
4. Think about your choices, and then make your decision.

John's Dilemma

Tonight is a big basketball game. All of my friends are going and they want me to go too. But I have an important history test tomorrow that I really need to study for. My grade depends on this test.



A. Going to the Game - Positives

1. I'll have fun being with my friends.
2. I will be supporting my school team.

Going to the Game - Negatives

1. I won't have any time to study.
2. I'll get a lower grade on tomorrow's test.

B. Staying Home - Positives

1. I'll have plenty of time to study.
2. I'll get a better grade on my test.
3. I won't be stressed out about the test or my grade.

Staying Home - Negatives

1. I'll miss seeing the game.
2. I'll feel left out.

I looked at my two choices and decided to stay home and study. Getting a good grade on this test is important to me. And I can go to the next game – when I don't have a test to study for.

Decisions students need to make

We asked our students to tell us about some of the decisions that middle schoolers have to make. Here are a few of their responses.

“You have to decide how you're going to spend your free time. I have friends who seem to spend all of their time on their phone or online. I'm on the soccer team and it takes up a lot of time. But it's fun, and I like doing something that's active.” Brianna

“You have to start thinking about what kind of career you want to have, and what you're going to do after high school.” Joe

“If you have a problem, you have to figure out what to do about it. I was having a problem with math, so I decided to get some help after school. Now I'm getting a B in math.” Anna



Make good choices

During the next few years, you'll hear a lot about smoking, drinking, drugs, and sex. Everyone knows that it's harmful and illegal for students to drink or smoke. And everyone knows that taking drugs is both illegal and dangerous. As for relationships, middle school students should be very careful about getting into any kind of physical relationship.

Choices have consequences

Some middle school students drink, smoke, or use drugs. These students have made a choice, and they will have to deal with the negative consequences. At some point, you may have to decide whether or not you're going to do these things.

Consider the consequences and decide what activities you will, and will not, get involved in. Also, think about what you will say and do *before* you're in a situation where you have to make a quick decision. For example, you should decide that smoking is something you're not going to do *before* someone offers you a cigarette.

You don't have to "go along with the crowd"

Sometimes students do things they normally wouldn't do just to go along with the crowd. Of course, they often later regret their actions. *Think about who you are and who you want to be, before you find yourself in a difficult situation.*

Don't ever do something that doesn't feel right, and don't ever feel that you need to explain yourself, if someone asks you to do something that you don't want to do, just say, "*No, I don't think so*" or "*No thanks.*" Of course, you can also make up an excuse and just leave.



No
Thanks!

"I see lots of people making choices because of what their friends think. But their friends won't be the ones who have to face the consequences." Marisa

"I felt pressure from a friend once. But I thought about what might happen, said no, and walked away. I'm glad I did." Emily



Step 7 - Navigate the Social Scene

Friendships are very important in middle school.

Most middle school students are more interested and involved in social activities than they were in elementary school. There are parties, dances, sporting events, and lots of gossip. Students care about how other students act and what they wear, and everyone is worried about how they look.

The middle school social scene can be exciting, crazy, and sometimes difficult to deal with. We talked to several eighth graders, and here are their suggestions on how to deal with it.

1. "Go out of your way to be friendly. Smile and talk to people – even to people you don't know." Luis
2. "Find friends who have the same interests as you do, and who like you for who you are." Thomas
3. "Don't do something that isn't you just to be cool." Justin
4. "Don't talk badly about others. It always gets back to them!" Tasha
5. "Be really careful about what you post online—and about what you text." Charlotte
6. "Don't worry about being popular, and don't get caught up in the drama and dumb fights." Chloe
7. "It's a lot easier to make friends when you're in sports or band or something." Connor
8. "Don't take people too seriously, and let stuff go." Lilly





Step 8 - Deal with Stress Anger, and Bullies

In middle school, students sometimes get stressed out, and some students get angry more often. Unfortunately, some students act like bullies.

Dealing with stress

In middle school, the classes are usually harder, there's more social pressure, and life is more complicated. These things sometimes cause students to feel stressed out. When you're feeling stressed, try these relaxation techniques.

- ▶ Take a deep breath, and then slowly release it. Do this until you feel your body relax.
- ▶ Think of a place where you feel relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being there.



Whenever you're under a lot of stress, spend time with your family and friends—and talk to them about what's going on. Talking is good because it helps you sort things out.

When you're feeling stressed, take good care of yourself. Get plenty of sleep, eat right, and get some exercise. (Physical activity can actually reduce stress.) Try to keep a sense of humor, and do things that help you feel calm and relaxed (take a hot bath, go for a walk or bike ride, play with a pet).

We asked our group of students what they do to relieve stress. Here is what they said:

"I read a book to relax." Sophia

"I go someplace quiet and just listen to music." James

"Playing basketball helps me relieve stress." Darius

"I write my feelings down in my journal." Liz

"I go outside and take a long walk." Jennifer

Dealing with anger

We all get angry sometimes. But some people seem to get angry a lot. Sometimes people get so angry they think they're going to explode. If you ever get so angry that you don't know what to do, try these things:

- ▶ Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and slowly count to 10.
- ▶ Do something physical to get rid of the negative energy. Take a walk, shoot hoops, kick a soccer ball, or lift weights.
- ▶ Talk to a friend, parent, or counselor.
- ▶ If you're angry about something posted on social media, don't respond right away. Take a step back, and remember that anything you post can be seen by others...forever.

Dealing with bullies

In middle school, you'll probably run into some students who act like jerks. You may also see a few students who are more than jerks. They are bullies. The best way to deal with bullies is to avoid them. A bully is looking for a reaction, so if you're ever the target of a bully, ignore him/her and just walk away.



If you're having a problem with a bully in school or online, let your friends know what's going on and ask for their support. Also tell a parent, counselor, or teacher. If a bully is causing you problems, chances are he/she is also causing problems for other students. When you tell someone what's happening, you're not only taking action to protect yourself, you're making your school a better, safer place for everyone.

Bullies want power and they like to have an audience. Since bullies are influenced by how other people react, bystanders need to let bullies know that their behavior is not cool. ***Bystanders are the key to stopping bullies!***

"This guy in my class used to give me a hard time. I finally just told him to stop it. After that he left me alone." Antonio

"If you're having a problem with a bully, make sure that you let someone know about it." Brooke



Step 9 – Get Along with Your Parents

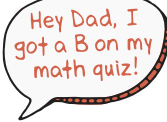
Getting along with your parents will make your middle school years a lot easier—and a lot more fun.

In middle school, you're going to have all sorts of new experiences and challenges. Your parents are also facing a new challenge—they are now the parents of a middle school student!

During your middle school years, you and your parents will go through different stages, and sometimes you will disagree with one another. For example, you may want more time to hang out with your friends, more freedom, or more privacy than your parents want to give you.

While you may not always agree with your parents, if you do the 10 things listed below, you and your parents will probably get along just fine.

1. Remember that your parents love you and care about you, and that sometimes when you're out with friends, they worry about you.
2. Talk to your parents about what's happening in school and about what you and your friends are doing. Just telling your parents little things can make a big difference in how you and your parents get along.
3. Never be disrespectful to your parents.
4. Bring your friends home so your parents can meet them.
5. Make a real effort to do well in school.
6. Do chores without complaining.
7. Always tell your parents where you're going and when you'll be home. Check in with them often. (The more you let your parents know what's going on, the more freedom they're likely to give you.)



8. If you have done something wrong, don't lie about it. Admit what you've done and accept the consequences. Your parents will probably be more understanding if you tell the truth.
9. When you and your parents disagree, first try to understand why they feel the way they do. Then, if you believe that what you want is totally reasonable, try to work things out by compromising.

Here's how Alyssa made it work.

Alyssa wanted to go to the mall with friends from 4:00 to 7:00, but her parents said no. They said the mall isn't safe, and that there isn't anything she needs to buy.



Rather than get angry, Alyssa said, "Mom and Dad, I know you worry about me, but we just look at the clothes and walk around. We never talk to people we don't know, and we always stay together. I promise to call you every hour to check in, and if you're worried about me being there til 7:00, I'll come home at 6:30."

If her parents say ok, then Alyssa will need to do exactly what she promised to do. She'll need to call every hour, and be ready to come home at 6:30.

If her parents still say no, Alyssa needs to accept their decision, without getting upset. If Alyssa is able to do this, her parents will be impressed with how mature she is being, and they may be more likely to say yes the next time.

10. Communicate. If there's something that you want or need, or if you have a problem, tell your parents. They aren't mind readers. You have to help them understand what you need from them.

Hint: When you're talking to your parents, try using "I statements." For example, rather than, "You don't trust me," say "I feel like you don't trust me."

Tips for getting along with parents

We asked several students for tips on how to get along with parents. Here are a few of their best suggestions.

“Still do things with your parents. Ask them to help you study and do things like go shopping. Also, ask them for their opinion about things.” Jennifer

“Bring your friends over and introduce them to your parents. Parents feel better when they know who you’re hanging out with.” Tyler

“When you go someplace, tell your parents where you’re going. If you go someplace different, let them know.” James

“When you disagree, try to explain yourself without getting upset or angry.” Darius

“Treat your parents with respect and listen to their advice.” Kate

“Try to put yourself in your parents’ shoes. It will help you understand where they’re coming from.” Sarah

Hint: If you do well in school, your parents are likely to be more understanding about a lot of other things. Studying hard and getting good grades pays off in lots of ways!





Step 10 - Plan and Prepare for Your Future

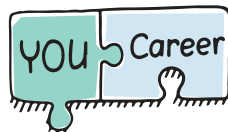
Middle school is a good time for you to start thinking about what kind of career you might like to have.

Before you can begin to choose a career, there are a number of things you need to consider. You need to think about:

- ▶ what you're good at (abilities)
- ▶ what you like to do (interests)
- ▶ what you have a natural talent for (aptitudes)
- ▶ what's important to you (values)

To learn about different careers, ask several adults to tell you about their career. Ask them what they like and don't like about their career, and about how they prepared for it. Also, ask if they have any advice for someone who's considering a similar career.

Don't worry about finding the perfect career right now. Just try to identify one or two career areas that might be a good match for you, and take some time to learn about the careers in those areas.



Seven Career Areas

Business – business manager, accountant, paralegal

Health Care – nurse, paramedic, dental hygienist

High Tech/Computers – engineer, computer programmer

The Arts – musician, artist, actor, designer

Education – teacher, professor

Human Services – social worker, firefighter, police officer

Skilled Trades – auto mechanic, plumber, carpenter

For information on a specific career, visit www.bls.gov/ooh.

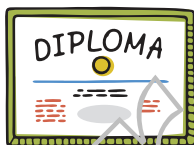
Six Ways to Prepare for a Great Career

Graduation from high school is several years away, but it's not too early to start thinking about what you want to do after you graduate. Maybe you already know what you want to do; maybe you have no idea. Even though you don't need to make any decisions now, this is a good time to start thinking about what kind of career you would like to have, and to learn about the different ways you can prepare for a career.

Here are six different ways you can prepare for a rewarding career. Remember, most careers require education or training after high school!

1 High school career and technology program

Most high schools offer career and technology programs in several different career fields (e.g., carpentry, computer technology, cosmetology, dental assisting). Students in these programs spend much of their time "learning by doing." To find out about the career and technology programs available in your school district, talk to your counselor.



2 Two-year college

Community and technical colleges provide affordable programs that make it possible for students to begin their career after two years of college or less.

Careers you can prepare for at a two-year college include business, law enforcement, early childhood education, interior design, and engineering technology.

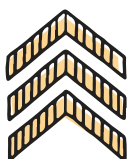


3 Four-year college

A four-year college education can open doors and provide a wide range of career choices and opportunities. While all four-year colleges want bright, well-prepared students, they vary greatly in their size, costs, and in the majors they offer. Here are a few of the most popular college majors: accounting, biology, business, education, engineering, English, psychology.

4 Career or trade school

Career and trade schools offer short-term training in many different career fields. While some programs last only a few weeks, others take up to two years to finish. These are just a few of the careers you can prepare for at a career or trade school: auto mechanic, chef, child care worker, court reporter, photographer.



5 The Military

The military trains young men and women to serve and protect our country. The military offers qualified individuals free job training in a variety of jobs. They also have a number of programs to help students pay for college.

6 Apprenticeship

Apprentices learn their trade through a combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction. Apprenticeship programs are considered by many to be the best way to get training in the skilled trades (e.g., carpentry, electrical work, firefighting, plumbing, roofing).

Fast Growing Career Fields

Health Care – As our population gets older, we need more people working in health care. New technology will also create new careers in the medical field.

STEM – **S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering, **M**ath
Many of the fastest growing careers are in these four areas.

Ask your parents if they can help you job shadow someone for a few hours. It's a great way to find out what a career is really like.

Discover who you are—get involved in lots of different activities, and develop your skills and talents!

Top 10 Tips for Students

We asked some eighth graders what advice they'd give to middle school students. Here are their top 10 suggestions.

1. "Try to be nice to everyone. If you do this, you will have lots of friends." John
2. "Take your grades seriously, but don't let your life revolve around getting As." Justin
3. "Focus on your schoolwork. If you don't understand something, ask for help." Brooke
4. "Don't be too hard on yourself. Everyone does stupid things in middle school—just forget about it and move on." Sophia
5. "Get involved in activities, even if you don't think you're that good. You don't have to be good at something to have fun." TJ
6. "Don't be upset if some of your friends start hanging out with new people. Everyone makes new friends in middle school." Mia
7. "Be organized. It will save you a lot of time." Kate
8. "Don't follow the crowd—people will like you better if you're not afraid to be you." Darius
9. "Keep up on all of your assignments. If you do, you'll probably get decent grades." Chen
10. "Have fun—middle school goes really fast." Tyler



Tips for Parents

Middle school is a time of change, and most students go through several stages and lots of ups and downs. The tips below will help you guide and advise your student during these exciting years.

Help your child succeed in school.

- ▶ Middle school students often need help with organization. Make sure your child has a system for recording assignments, taking notes, and keeping papers organized.
- ▶ Help your child set realistic academic goals. Discuss what your child needs to do to achieve his/her goals.
- ▶ Encourage your child to get involved in school activities. He/she will enjoy school more.
- ▶ Work with your school. Teachers, counselors, and principals are there to help your child get the best education possible.

Be involved and provide support.

- ▶ Attend open houses and parent conferences. Also, regularly check your school's website for information and updates.
- ▶ Know the dates that midterm grades and report cards come out. If you don't see a report card, call the school and request a copy. If your child's grades are accessible online, check them often.
- ▶ Look for ways to praise and reward good grades and extra effort.
- ▶ Talk to your child about what's happening in school and be a good listener.
- ▶ Whenever possible, help your child figure out how to take care of problems on his/her own. Your child will gain confidence and become more independent. If your child is unable to resolve an issue, or if there's a serious problem, be available to intervene.

Provide guidelines and set limits.

- ▶ Require your child to be in school every day, on time.
- ▶ If you're trying to change a behavior, first make sure that your child understands your expectations. You can then offer rewards if your expectations are met, and consequences if they're not. Never take away a positive activity (e.g., sports, choir, scouting) as a consequence.
- ▶ Explain to your child that you'll be checking on where he/she is going, and with whom. When children know their parents are checking on them, they're less likely to do things they shouldn't.
- ▶ Make sure your child isn't spending too much time online, playing video games, on the phone, or watching TV. Set limits.

Help keep your child safe online.

- ▶ Explore websites together with your child. Ask your child to show you his/her favorite sites.
- ▶ Discuss what information is appropriate (and inappropriate) for social networking sites. Make sure that access to your child's personal profile is limited to those on his/her "friends list."
- ▶ Have your child sign an Internet Safety Contract. (Several examples are available online.)
- ▶ Use parental control software to help keep your child safe and to limit time online.
- ▶ Make sure your child understands that people online may not be who they say they are. Tell your child to never post personal information online (e.g., address, phone number, school, favorite hangout).
- ▶ Remind your child that anything he/she texts or posts online becomes public, and that anyone can see it... forever



Make school a top priority.

Nothing is more important to your child's future than education.

Tips for parents - From students

We asked students what advice they would give to the parents of middle school students. Here's what they had to say.

1. "Encourage your kids to get involved in sports, clubs, or something. They'll like school a lot more." Justin
2. "Don't be overprotective, but do ask where your kids are going, what they'll be doing, and who they'll be with." Carlos
3. "Make sure that you know how your kids are doing in school, but don't pressure them too much, and don't nag." Kate
4. "Middle school is a new experience. Give your children a chance to figure things out for themselves." Kyle
5. "Understand that there's a lot of pressure being put on us in school, and that sometimes we make mistakes. Help your kids learn from their mistakes." Sarah
6. "Let your kids to go out and have fun with their friends, but tell them when to be home, and make them check in." Anna
7. "Go to your child's games or concerts or whatever. Sometimes we act like we don't care if you go, but we do." John
8. "Listen, ask questions, and let your children know that they can talk to you." Jennifer
9. "These years are hard, so cut your kids some slack. Don't let them be disrespectful though." Tyrone
10. "Be supportive and be patient." Nick



**Getting The
Most
Out Of
Middle School
Junior High**

Information and tips to help you
succeed in school and have a
great middle school experience.



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