

Table of Contents



Compare the ten steps listed here with the list your students made.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Know What to Expect in Middle School | 2 |
| Step One | |
| Know Your School | 3 |
| Step Two | |
| Be In School Every Day | 6 |
| Step Three | |
| Know How to Get Good Grades | 7 |
| Step Four | |
| Set Goals | 10 |
| Step Five | |
| Get Involved | 12 |
| Step Six | |
| Make Good Choices and Decisions | 14 |
| Step Seven | |
| Deal with Stress, Anger, and Bullies | 17 |
| Step Eight | |
| Get Along with Your Parents | 19 |
| Step Nine | |
| Understand the Social Scene | 22 |
| Step Ten | |
| Plan and Prepare for Your Future | 23 |
| Tips for Students | 26 |
| Tips for Parents | 27 |



Step Four Set Goals

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

Goals give you direction and focus. They help you figure out what you want to accomplish, and they help you decide where you want to go in life. If you're not in the habit of setting goals for yourself, now is the time to start.

Ask students for some examples of both short-term and long-term goals.

Discuss how setting short-term goals can help someone achieve a long-term goal.

For example, if a student's long-term goal is to make the basketball team, what are some short-term goals that he/she might set? (Practice dribbling 15 minutes a day, be able to run a mile in less than 10 minutes, make 45 out of 100 foul shots).

Ask students for two examples of goals that are not specific, not measurable, and not realistic (e.g., do better in school, save money, get better at soccer). Write these on the board. Then change each goal to make it specific, measurable, and realistic.

Set short-term and long-term goals

Short-term goals are goals that you can achieve within days or weeks. Long-term goals are goals that will take weeks, months, or even years to achieve. Below are a few examples.

Examples of 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.*



Examples of long-term goals:

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

Set 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 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, look over the courses you're taking and figure out what grade you think you can get 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 were able to meet 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 or three things you want to accomplish that don't involve grades and 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, Brooke set a goal for herself, and then she made a list of the things she needed to do to achieve her goal.



My goal is to have enough money to buy an iPod before the end of next month. 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 money*
- ▶ *baby-sit for my aunt and save the money I earn*

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

"For every class I take, I set a goal based on what grade I think I can get. This gives me something to work for." Chin

"I'm always setting goals for myself. For example, my new goal is to be able to run a mile in 8 minutes." Anna

After reading this page, ask students to come up with three personal goals for the current grading period. At least one goal should be academic and at least one should be non-academic.

Remind students that each goal should be 1) specific, 2) measurable, and 3) realistic. Ask students to write their three goals on a piece of paper. Ask them to also write down one thing they can do to help them achieve each goal. Assure students that no one will see what they have written. When they're finished, have students fold their paper and put their name on the outside.

Collect these papers and tell your students that you will return them at the end of the term. Students will then be able to see if they were able to meet their goals. At the end of the grading period, return the papers to your students. Did they achieve their goals?

Ask students to then make new goals for the following grading period.



Step Five Get Involved

Before looking at this section, ask students to name as many different school activities as they can. Write these on the board. (Have a list of your school's activities available so that you can add any that were missed.)

As a group, make a list of reasons why students might want to participate in school activities. Write this list on the board.

Read this page and compare this list to the list your students made.

If any students are currently participating in school activities, ask them to share their experiences.

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.

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

The important thing is that you get involved. You'll make new friends, gain new skills, and you'll also have a lot of fun.



Reasons to participate in school activities

► Spend time with friends and meet new people

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

► Try something new

"One of my teachers 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." Carlos

► Enjoy school more

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

► **Become a leader**

“Being a class representative has helped me gain confidence. It’s also helped me develop leadership skills.” James

► **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 a while.” 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.” Tasha

► **Have fun**

“School activities are the best part of school.” Sophia

Get involved in activities outside of school

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

While friends and group activities are important, it’s also important to have things that you enjoy doing by yourself. During the next few years, take time to develop some personal skills and hobbies.

Here are just a few things that middle school students can do on their own: cook, read, camp, juggle, fish, dance, shoot hoops, make jewelry, build something, take pictures, write stories, knit, start a collection (comic books, rocks, coins), play an instrument, sew, draw, hike, garden, exercise, decorate a bedroom, listen to music, take care of a pet, make a Web page, help an elderly relative or neighbor.

Discuss how students can become involved in activities at your school.

Discuss activities that are available in your community (e.g. church youth groups, Habitat for Humanity, community sports programs, volunteering for a charity).

Ask students to share one activity (in or out of school) that they are involved in.

Ask students what they like about this activity.

Ask students to tell about an activity or hobby that they do on their own.

Writing option:
Describe your favorite activity outside of school.

Find something that you love to do, and then do it!



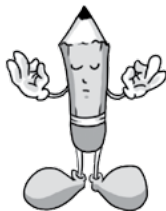
Step Seven - Deal with Stress, Anger, and Bullies

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

Dealing with stress

When you're feeling stressed, try one of the following relaxation techniques:

- ▶ Take a deep breath, and then slowly release it. Do this until you feel your body relax.
- ▶ Starting at the top of your head, flex and then relax each part of your body.
- ▶ Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.



Whenever you are under a lot of stress, spend time with your family and friends, and talk about what's going on. Talking is good because it helps you sort out things. Also, try to keep a sense of humor, and take time for the things that have helped you feel calm and relaxed in the past (listening to music, going for a walk, taking a hot bath, reading a good book, playing with a pet).

Whenever 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.

We asked our group of students what they do to relieve stress. Here are a few of their answers:

"To relax, I read a book." Sophia

"I just listen to music." James

"Playing sports helps me relieve stress." Darius

"When I feel stressed, I play video games." John

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



Before reading this section, talk about how we feel when we're under a lot of stress (heart pounds, anxious feeling in the pit of the stomach, etc.). Tell students about a time or situation in which you personally felt stressed. Ask students to tell about times when they feel stressed (before a big test, before a big game, etc.).

As a group, try one or more of these relaxation techniques. Discuss the results.

Ask students to share how they handle stress.

Does getting angry sometimes make a situation worse?

Ask students to tell what they do when they get angry. Do these things help?

List additional healthy ways to deal with anger. Is anger always a bad thing?

Ask students to define bully. (*A person who is habitually cruel to smaller or weaker people.*)

Ask students if they, or anyone they know, has ever been bullied.

What happened, and what did they do about it?

Is bullying a problem in your school? (If not, discuss the effects of teasing.)

Discuss (or role play) what someone should do if they're being bullied. What can bystanders do to discourage bullying?

Discuss the fact that while you don't have control over someone else's behavior, you do have a choice as to how you react.

Dealing with anger

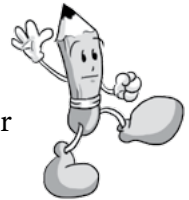
We all get angry sometimes. Some people, however, seem to get angry a lot. Sometimes people get so angry they think they're going to burst. If you ever get so angry that you don't know what to do, try one of the following:

- ▶ Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and count to 10.
- ▶ Do something physical to get rid of the negative energy (take a walk, shoot baskets, kick a ball, lift weights).
- ▶ Talk to a friend, parent, or counselor.

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 a bully is to stay away from that person. A bully is looking for a reaction, so if you're ever the target of a bully, ignore him/her, or make an expression that says, "This is *really* stupid." Then walk away.



If you're having a problem with a bully, let your friends know what's going on and ask for their support. If a bully ever harasses or threatens you, be sure to 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 can help discourage a student from being a bully. Bystanders need to let bullies know that their behavior is "not cool" and that it is not acceptable. Bystanders are the key to stopping bullies!

"Everyone gets teased once in a while. If you ignore it, it will probably stop." Emily

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



Step Eight - Get Along With Your Parents

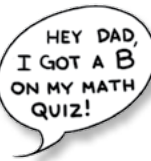
Getting along with your parents will make your middle school years a lot easier and a lot more fun.

In middle school, you're going to have all sorts of new experiences and challenges. Your parents, of course, 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. 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 ten things listed below, you and your parents will probably get along just fine during these next few years.

1. Remember that your parents 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. When you talk to your parents about what's going on in your life, they're less likely to think you're hiding things from them. Even telling them little simple things can make a big difference.
3. *Never* be disrespectful to your parents.
4. Bring your friends home so that 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.



Ask students why their parents might worry when they go out on their own. What do they think their parents worry about most?

Talk about (or role play) how someone can be disrespectful without ever saying a word.

Ask student what qualities they think their parents hope to find in their friends. What do they want in a friend?

8. If you've 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 them the truth.

After reading number 9, ask for an example of something a student might want permission to do (go to a high school football game, a friend's party, sleepover, etc.).

Then have students identify the things that their parents might be worried or concerned about (e.g., they might get hurt, be pressured to do something they shouldn't do, be put in a situation that they're not ready to handle).

What are some things that students can do to help put their parents' fears to rest?

What are some things students can do to show their maturity to their parents?

Discuss situations with little or no compromise (e.g., going to school, drinking, following parent's rules, etc.).

Discuss situations that might involve compromise (e.g., allowance, bed time, time spent with friends, etc.).

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 truly reasonable, try to work things out by compromising. The following example will give you an idea of how this can work.

Taylor wanted to go to the mall with her friends from 4:00 to 9:00, but her parents said no. They said that the mall isn't safe and that there isn't anything she needs to buy.

Rather than get angry with her parents, Taylor said, "Mom and Dad, I know you worry about me, but really, 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. If you're worried about me being there after dark, I'll be home by 8:00."

If Taylor's parents say ok, then Taylor will need to do exactly what she said she'd do. She'll need to call every hour, and she'll need to be home by 8:00.

If her parents still say no, Taylor needs to accept their decision - without griping. If Taylor 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 is 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."