

How to Prepare Your Child for Middle School

It can be daunting for you and for your child when your child heads to middle school. The school will be bigger, full of new students and teachers, and your child will go from being one of the oldest kid in school to one of the youngest....

Part 1 of 3:

Getting School Supplies and Clothing



Get your child a lock for her locker before school starts. It can be stressful for children to transition from cubbies in elementary school to lockers in middle school. Prepare your child for daily locker use by buying your child a lock with a combination she can remember. Encourage your child to practice opening and closing the locker so she can get into her locker at school when she needs to.^[1]

1. Most middle schools will provide locks for student lockers and/or provide combinations for the locks that your child will need to memorize. Getting her used to using a lock before school starts will give her more confidence when it comes time to use her new locker.

2.



Ask your child's teachers for a list of school supplies. Many teachers will provide a list of supplies before the beginning of the school year or on the first day of classes. Your child will need to take several subjects in middle school and will likely be required to buy supplies for each subject, such as protractors, scientific calculators, and reading materials.^[2]

1. Leading up to the first day of school, you and your child should go shopping for basic school supplies like spiral notebooks, college rule paper, index cards, pens and pencils, and binders.

3.



Contact the school for information about the dress code. Your child's middle school will have a clear policy on dress code and your child should try to adhere to them.^[3]

1. However, it's important that your child feels like she can fit with her peers when she gets dressed for school. Take note of what middle school children are wearing and what middle school fashions are advertised in stores. Try to come to a compromise with your child if she wants clothing you may not approve of, as long as it fits within the school dress code.

Boosting Your Child's Social Skills and Academic Skills



Help your child create a school schedule. Boost your child's organizational skills by helping her to write down a weekly school schedule, including all her classes and time set aside every night for homework. This will encourage her to stay organized during the school year and recognize her priorities as a middle school student. [4]

1. If your child has hobbies or outside activities she likes to do, she should add in time in her schedule for them. It's important that your child has a balance of school work and outside activities during the school year.



Talk about how to be a good listener and getting along with others. As a new middle schooler, your child may be anxious about making friends and interacting with new people. Have a discussion with them about the importance of being a good listener and learning to get along with others in a group setting. Remind her that one of the traits of a good friend is being a good listener and expressing your feelings in a friendly and open way.^[5]

1. Demonstrate active listening to your child, which is when you intentionally focus on the person who is speaking, in a group or one-on-one. As an active listener, you should be able to repeat back what the person said in your own words. Keep in mind this does not mean you necessarily agree with the person's thoughts, but it will show that you understood what they said clearly. You should advise your child to think about how it would feel to walk in the other person's shoes and to listen with her ears as well as with her eyes and her body language. She should avoid interrupting the person speaking and let them complete their train of thought before she speaks. Once the person finishes speaking, she can respond with questions and thoughts of her own.^[6]
2. You can lead by example and act as a good active listener to your child. Ask her about her thoughts and emotions and encourage her to express her ideas. Treating her like an adult, with a mind of her own, will also help her socialize with her peers and her teachers in the middle school setting.
3. You should also encourage your child to join in conversations and teach her how to interrupt politely. Stress the importance of making eye contact with the person you are talking to and addressing people by name.

3.



Ask your child if she is anxious about transitioning to middle school and encourage her to share her feelings. Many children are nervous or anxious about making the transition to middle school and it can be helpful for your child to share any feelings she may be having leading up to her first day. Show interest in her feelings and be an active listener as she discusses any anxiety or fear.

1. You and your child can then have a discussion about ways she can calm her nerves and be more confident when she heads into her first day of middle school. This could be getting all the necessary supplies and clothing before her first day, joining a club or a sports group, or encouraging your child to spend time with other middle school kids so she is socially prepared for her first day.

4.



Encourage your child to join clubs at school. Another way to help your child socialize at school is to encourage her to get interested in clubs, sports, and recreational activities. This will give her a way to interact with her peers and children her own age. It can also smooth her transition to middle school, as she will have a group she can belong to and participate in on a daily or weekly basis.^[7]

1. You can do this by asking your child what she is interested in and if she might want to get involved in a group at school. Often, children are very vocal about their interest and only need to be encouraged by a parent to join a club, a group, or do a sport.

Part 3 of 3:

Supporting Your Child at School

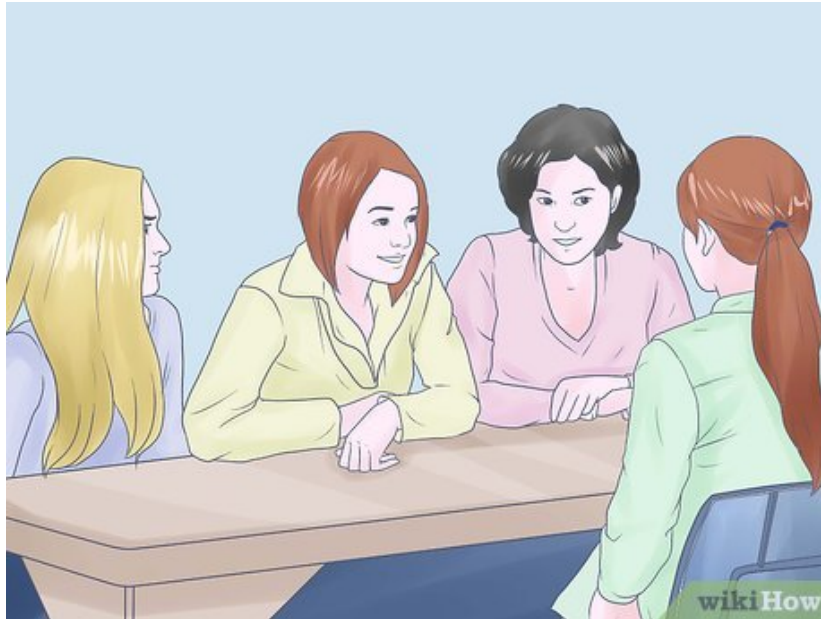
1.



Go on a tour of the new middle school together. A good way to bond with your child in her soon to be new environment is to take a tour of the new school together. Most middle schools will also hold a new student orientation where parents and incoming students can meet teachers and other faculty, as well as each other. Attend these events to show your child how important it is to participate in school events, and to support her adjustment to middle school.^[8]

1. It may also be useful to do a tour of the school with your child on your own to get a better sense of your child's classrooms. Carry a copy of your child's schedule and walk around together exploring the school. This will help your child better prepare for her first day.

2.



Join the school's parent organization. Most middle schools will have a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or a Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and will encourage new parents to get involved. Being a member of the parent organization at your child's middle school will help you remain connected to any new developments or ongoing discussions, and get to know the other parents and the teachers.^[9]

1. Your child will likely take your participation in the parent association as a sign of support and involvement from you. It will help you show your child that you care about what happens at the middle school and are willing to get to know new people as well.

3.



Discuss transportation options to and from school. As part of your child's growing independence, you and your child may talk about the possibility of taking the bus alone to school or walking to school if you live within walking distance. It's important that you stress the need for independence and responsibility to your child through offering different transportation options to and from middle school. ^[10]

1. The safety of your child comes first, so if you feel uncomfortable with your child taking the bus alone or walking alone to school, discuss a carpooling option with neighborhood kids who go to the same school.

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