

Middle Childhood (5-10 years)

For parents

Middle childhood addresses children ages 5 to 10 years. Five-year olds may prepare for the first day of “real” school with excitement and some uncertainty. By age ten, most feel capable and independent in their communities. As parents you will want to allow greater freedom but also continue to provide good supervision during these years. Crossing streets, riding bicycles, staying home alone - these are areas parents will need to make decisions about, based on children’s skills and judgment, and the level of safety in the community. The challenge to parents is to provide clear rules and expectations while offering support as children begin to make choices for themselves.

From six years on, milestones are not as easy to list. Look for growing skills, increased vocabulary, interest in new hobbies, sports, making friends and getting along with others. Health care providers, teachers, scout leaders, neighbors and relatives will also be able to give you clues as to how your child is growing and developing. There are many right ways to raise healthy children!





Thinking Ahead: Family Relationships

Sharing Time (and yourself)

- ☼ You are the best and most important role model for your child. Think about what you and other family members do everyday that help your child develop good values and beliefs.
- ☼ Listen carefully and show respect for your child's ideas, even when you don't agree with all of them. Let him know he can discuss ideas with you even if he will hear different ones from you.
- ☼ Spend some time individually with each child in the family - talking, playing, having a special treat or just doing everyday tasks together.
- ☼ Show interest in your child's activities. Ask about school and after-school activities, look at schoolwork - every day if you can.
- ☼ Eat together as a family as often as possible - so everyone can share ideas and talk over their day's activities. Treat this as a special time.
- ☼ Get to know your child's friends. Talk to their parents so you'll have an idea of their routines and values.

Feelings

- ☼ Show affection to your child and to all members of the family. Some families hug and kiss; others share family jokes, write little notes, or have bedtime chats or quiet times together. However you do it, let your child know how much you love her and how important she is to you.



- ❖ Help your child think about how to handle upset feelings in safe ways. Let children know that anger, frustration, and disappointment are normal emotions that everyone feels from time to time.
- ❖ Allow brothers and sisters to work out disagreements as much as possible on their own. Help them find ways to do this without hurting each other physically or emotionally.

Expectations

- ❖ Talk about how you expect your child to behave at home, in school, and with friends. Set reasonable expectations. Consider your child's ideas.
- ❖ Encourage your child to be responsible for himself and his things by putting away toys and clothes, picking up rooms, and doing chores for the family.
- ❖ Plan what you will do if your child doesn't go along with family rules:
 - Respond immediately.
 - Sit together and discuss what has happened when everyone is calm.
 - Be consistent in your response.





Thinking Ahead: Being Part of Your Community



Connections with Others

- ✿ Participate as a family in school and community organizations and activities.
- ✿ Build relationships with friends, neighbors, and family - those nearby as well as those far away.

Resources

- ✿ Talk with friends, neighbors, and professionals about information for:
 - after-school and weekend activities for children and families
 - ways to cover the costs of health care and food
 - affordable housing
 - convenient and affordable transportation



- ✿ Talk with neighbors about your community. Are there safe and clean places to play, resources or programs that would improve life? Work together on projects and improvements.

Contributions

- ✿ Share your knowledge and experience of your community with others.
- ✿ Talk with other parents about how schools in your community provide - or could provide - education and activities to encourage healthy living.
- ✿ Talk with your child about current events. Help her understand her place in the community and how it is part of the bigger world.



Thinking Ahead: Helping Your Child Gain Confidence and Social Skills

Support with Social Skills

- ☼ Promote respect and positive relationships between your child and other children, teachers, and adults.
- ☼ Praise your child for her efforts to cooperate with others.
- ☼ Talk to your child about school, friends, and feelings. Answer questions and try to encourage discussion.



Exploration of Possibilities

- ☼ Find activities you and your child can do together. Spending time with each child is important.
- ☼ Also encourage individual activities - reading, music, sports, and other hobbies. New interests can be shared with other friends and lead to new areas of self-confidence.
- ☼ Expand your child's experiences by visiting parks, libraries, factories, your workplace, and other places of local interest. Family outings can broaden your child's view of the world.
- ☼ Help your child choose some activities in which he'll feel successful.
- ☼ Help your child choose other activities that are new - where she'll be challenged to develop new interests and skills. Support beginning efforts!



Friendships

- ❖ Find opportunities for your child to be with other children - in the neighborhood or through organized programs and sports.
- ❖ Help your child learn to get along with playmates; understand that cooperation and sharing are not always easy.
- ❖ Discuss ways to work out problems. Practice words and actions that might smooth the way with others.



Rewards and Encouragement for Good Behavior

- ❖ Set clear limits for your child's behavior.
 - Let him know when you are pleased.
 - Let her know when you are not pleased.
- ❖ At this age, children can understand rewards and consequences for their behavior.
- ❖ Help your child learn to adapt rules that apply at home to other settings.
- ❖ Identify chores around the house that are right for your child. Children should feel they are valued members of the family.
- ❖ Help your child understand and learn the beliefs and values you hold.



Privacy and Individuality

- ❖ It's important for children to have a place to call their own and be responsible for. Try to provide some personal space for your child at home, even if limited.
- ❖ Help your child recognize and value his individual strengths and unique qualities.



Thinking Ahead: Beginning School



Going to School for the First Time - 5 and 6 year olds

- ✿ Help your child become familiar with her new school and the school neighborhood.
- ✿ Before the first day, try to meet your child's teacher and tour the school with your child.
- ✿ Talk with your neighbors to see if there are other children in your child's class or school. Help them get to know each other before the school year begins.
- ✿ Talk about getting to and from school and after school arrangements.
- ✿ Make sure your child has all required immunizations- schedule a health visit if necessary.
- ✿ Have your child's immunization record handy - the school will ask for a copy.

Beginning of the School Year - Preparing Your Child

- ✿ Prepare your child for the first day of school. Discuss what the school day will be like. Talk about new opportunities - friends and activities - what kinds of things your child might do this year.
- ✿ Listen to your child's questions, concerns and expectations.
- ✿ Ask your child's teachers to call you if there are any problems or questions during the year.
- ✿ Try to keep up-to-date with school news and events. Let teachers and school staff know you'd like to be part of what goes on at school.
- ✿ If you can, volunteer for school activities: join the Parent Teacher Association, become a room parent, coach a team.



Thinking Ahead: Healthy Habits



Health and Development

- ❖ Teach children good health habits. Encourage and supervise them as they begin to develop their own self-care habits:
 - Hand washing and keeping clean; brushing teeth at least twice a day
 - Wearing sunscreen and bike helmets
- ❖ Be a role model for safe and healthy habits. Children learn a lot by watching others. When as parents, we wear seat belts, eat healthy food, practice personal hygiene, and avoid smoking, we are telling children in powerful ways to do the same!
- ❖ Ensure adequate sleep. Children in middle childhood are still growing and developing. They need between 9-12 hours of sleep a night.
- ❖ Encourage your child to be physically active on a regular basis. Limit the amount of time spent in front of the computer. Try to limit the amount of TV or videos your child watches in a day - no more than one hour a day of appropriate programs. Watch TV with your child occasionally.
- ❖ Find school and community activities your child will enjoy. Ask your health care provider and other parents about physical activities and programs they recommend. Many programs are free.
- ❖ Help your children learn about their bodies by using correct terms for all body parts for males and females. Talk to your health care provider about recommended books or materials on sexuality. Try to answer questions about sexuality in ways your child will understand.





Food and Eating

- ☼ Help your child learn to choose healthy foods. Always try to have nutritious snacks on hand (see page 97 for tips). Model good eating habits yourself.

Oral Health

- ☼ Encourage your child to brush, floss, and care for his teeth regularly - brush twice a day with a pea-size amount of fluoridated toothpaste.
- ☼ Make regular dental appointments - every 6 months or as your child needs.
- ☼ Establish a good partnership with your child's dentist.

Safety

- ☼ Set rules and safeguards for your home including:
 - telling children not to play with matches
 - making sure children know how to dial 911
 - store poisonous chemicals away
 - check smoke alarms regularly
 - remove guns from your home or keep them locked up
- ☼ Talk about drugs, alcohol, and tobacco and what they do to the body.
- ☼ Talk about peer pressure. Help your child think about how to handle being urged to do things that seem wrong or uncomfortable. Let her practice what she can say or do.
- ☼ Talk to your child about surfing the Internet safely (see page 98 for tips).
- ☼ Talk to your child about how to be safe with strangers and handle uncomfortable situations, even with people he knows.

