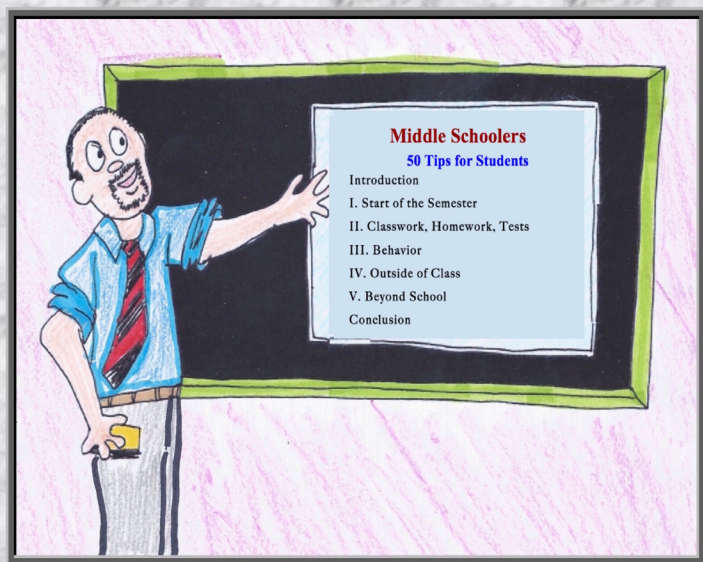


Middle Schoolers

50 Tips for Students



Paul Rallion

Middle Schoolers

50 Tips for Students

Paul Rallion, MAE, NBCT

Middle Schoolers

50 Tips for Students

Copyright © 2016 by Paul Rallion

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

This book is available at:

www.paulrallion.com

Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any web addresses or links contained in this book may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid.

ISBN: 978-1-365-27221-9 (eb)

Rev. date: 07/20/2016

Dedications

To All My Students Past, Present, and Future

I dedicate this book to all my students: past, present, and future. My interaction with them has improved my teaching practice. With this book, I'd like to reach those students that I won't have the fortune to meet.

—Paul

Introduction

Most students know the basic rules to do well in school. However, some students need more guidance than others. This guide will help you enrich your learning techniques, whether you are an A student or failing.

Middle School is a unique part of K-12 education. Students enter in the 6th grade as children, and leave after completing the 8th grade as young adults. No matter what grade you are in, **Middle Schoolers, 50 Tips for Students**, offers a compilation of techniques that have worked for many students over the years.

The goal of this book is to provide you with information you can use right away. Read these tips, and think how you can apply them to your own schooling experience.

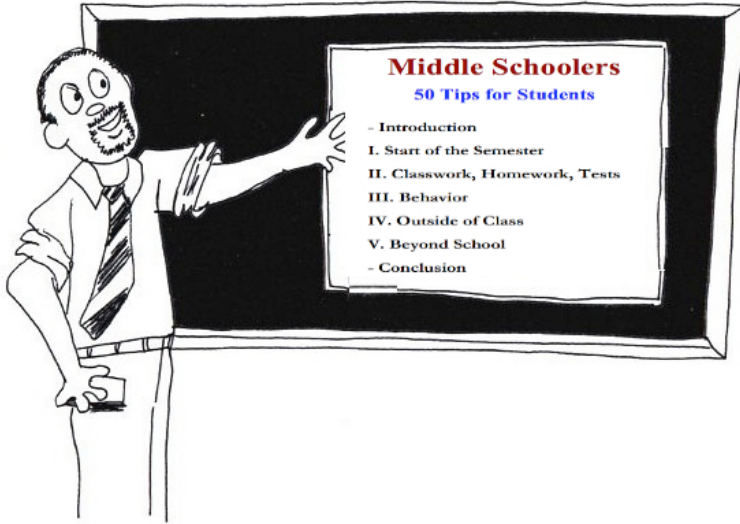
Disclaimer

The information in this book is for educational purposes only. Nothing herein should be interpreted as personalized advice. None of the information in this book is guaranteed to be correct, and anything written here should be considered subject to independent verification. The author does not take any responsibility for any opinions or ideas expressed in this book. The author does not assume any liability as a result of the use of the information presented herein. Under no circumstances will the author be responsible for incidental or consequential damages or direct or indirect damages that result from your use of the information in this book.

Please Note

To avoid the overuse of “he/she, him/her, his/her,” I am going to assume all students are boys, and use “he, him, his.” However, these tips apply to girls as well.

Part I: Start of the Semester



1.- The First Day of School:

The first day of school can be a day to be nervous. Try to relax and start with a positive attitude, ready to do well in all your classes. If the teacher allows you, sit in the front, or ask for permission to do so.

2.- Grading System:

Make sure you understand the grading system that includes the weight for homework, classwork, quizzes, tests, projects, etc. Understand how to get excellent (E) mark in both Work Habits and

Cooperation, or Citizenship.

3.- Class Rules:

Make sure you follow all class rules, all the time.

Most teachers' rules cover these:

- 1) Listen, unless allowed to talk.
- 2) Be seated, unless allowed to stand up.
- 3) No food, no drinks, no make-up, no toys, and no electronic devices in class (unless approved). Don't use a cell phone in class without permission, it may get confiscated and returned only to your parents.

4.- Learn your teachers' names:

Address them by "Mr." or "Ms." followed by their last name. Do not address a teacher by "Mr." or "Ms." alone, much less by first name!

5.- Stay Organized:

Staying organized will save you time and help you be efficient. Know where all your things are. Use an agenda or notebook to write all your assignments and tasks. Cross out things as you finish them, or put a check mark or asterisk by it.

6.- Choose Your Friends Carefully:

A good friend can help you; a bad friend can bring you down. Stay away from friends who don't care about school. If they don't improve, they'll

eventually separate themselves from school. Don't allow that to happen to you. Find a friend you can study with.

7.- Respect Others:

The best way to expect respect is to be respectful. If others are disrespectful to you, you can offer the premise that if you are respectful to them, why are they being disrespectful to you? The answer from the offending student is usually silence, but it gets them to think. By the way, respect the teacher too. Don't think you can outsmart the teacher. Believe it or not, teachers were your age, too! ☺

8.- Peer Counselor:

If you happen to have an older friend, ask for guidance about shaping up, if necessary. Students who fool around may listen to a peer that talks to them as a friend, or at least open up to them and start a change in behavior. It's no guarantee, but it may be worth trying.

9.- Not Getting Along with Another Student:

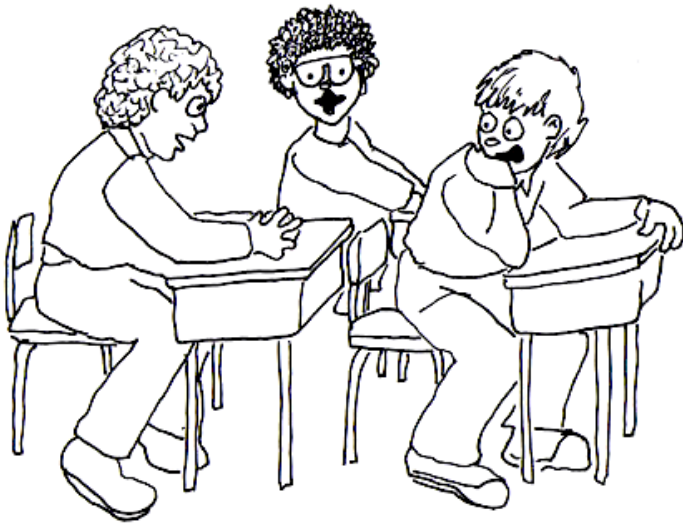
There are students who will not get along, no matter what. If you are sitting too close to another student, ask your teacher to separate you. Sometimes teachers don't find out about that until there is a heated

dispute between two students.

10.- Bullying:

Do your part in helping to keep this problem under control. If you witness bullying, you can always tell an adult, or write an anonymous note to your teacher or counselor. If you are a victim of bullying, do the same thing. Don't be a victim! Tell an adult. If you are bully...stop!

Part II: Classwork, Homework, Tests



11.- On the Board:

As you walk into class, check the board. Look at today's dispatch, your class agenda, other instructions, and your homework assignment. Unless told otherwise, get started with your dispatch.

12.- What Interests You?

"There are no uninteresting things, only uninterested people." – G.K. Chesterton

In all your classes, as much as possible, find something that interests you. There has to be something you like about the most boring class, whatever you think that class may be. This could be your best bet in avoiding discipline problems.

13.- Pay Attention:

This sounds simple enough, but countless students don't pay attention. Don't make your teacher shout over students' voices. Some teachers may even notice your good behavior and award you with an Excellent comment on the report card.

14.- What Kind of Learner Are You?

Not everybody learns in the same way. The different ways people learn are called Learning Modalities. In general, there are three, adapted from Barbe, Swassing, and Milone (June 1979):

- 1) Visual (Those who learn by seeing),
- 2) Auditory (Those who learn by hearing),
- 3) Tactile/Kinesthetic (Those who learn by touching), or
- 4) A combination of them.

Find out what your learning modality is. If you prefer diagrams, graphics, video clips, you are a visual learner. If you prefer lectures, discussions, music in the background, you are an auditory learner. If you prefer to use manipulatives like games, tablets,

computers, you are a tactile/kinesthetic learner.

15.-Know What You Want to Become and Stay Motivated:

Decide early what you want to become when you grow up. With that in mind, motivate yourself by finding a connection between your hobbies (and your goals) and your classes. Even if you change your mind later on, it's better to have a plan than to have no plan at all.

16.- Levels of Questioning Based on Bloom's Taxonomy:

There are several levels of thinking based on Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom, 1956). Each level calls for a different kind of thought process.

Know how to formulate questions with each kind.

For example:

Level 1 - Knowledge (what, who, when, where, why)

Level 2 - Comprehension (compare, contrast, explain, demonstrate, interpret)

Level 3 - Application (apply, develop, interview, organize, develop)

Level 4 - Analysis (analyze, classify, distinguish, examine)

Level 5 - Synthesis (synthesize, combine, compile, formulate)

Level 6 - Evaluation (evaluate, conclude, criticize,

decide, justify)

17.- PEMDAS:

Here are three rules of math you need to

MEMORIZE:

“Please Excuse My Dear Aunt Sally (PEMDAS = Parentheses, Exponents, Multiplication and Division, and Addition and Subtraction).”

“When adding or subtracting two numbers with the same sign, add both numbers and keep their sign. If the signs are different, subtract them and keep the sign of the larger number.”

“When multiplying or dividing two numbers with the same sign, the answer is positive. If they have different signs, the answer is negative.”

Bonus Tip – Make sure you know your multiplications tables!

18.- Did You Finish?

Avoid saying: “I finished” too much, unless the teacher is OK with it (which I doubt).

Students are different and do not always finish their work at the same time. So, what can you do instead of saying “I finished”? There are many possibilities: offer help to someone who still hasn’t finished, do an extra-credit activity, read a book, etc.

19.- Assessments:

Keep in mind that teachers use multiple methods for measuring student growth. There are informal assessments to evaluate students frequently and let them know about their progress. Plan on studying often for short quizzes or some other kind of assessment rather than cramming for a test.

20.- Homework:

Do your homework and turn it in on time. Even if other students don't do it, make it a habit to do it. Follow directions on how your teacher wants your homework. For example, instead of only writing your first name, write your full name, period number, the due date, etc. Be neat without tears on the paper, including no bits of paper sticking out from the side after tearing the sheet of paper from a spiral-bound notebook or a three-ring binder.

REFERENCES:

1. Walter Burke Barbe; Raymond H. Swassing; Michael N. Milone, Jr. (June 1979). Teaching Through Modality Strengths: Concepts and Practices.
2. Bloom, Benjamin S. (1956). Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook I: The Cognitive Domain. New York: David McKay Co Inc.

Part III: Technology



21.- Use a Calendar:

Use a wall calendar, a paper calendar, or an electronic calendar to mark various important school events: homework due dates, quizzes or test dates, parent conferences, minimum days, etc. This will help you remember things easier and not give the response of “I forgot” with an empty look on your face.

22.- Get a Google Account:

Use technology to help you with your classes and to communicate with your teachers. If our school doesn't provide you with a free account, ask your parents to sign you up for a Google account (you can get a Google Account if you're 13 or older).

With that account, you'll have access to email, Google Calendar®, Google Docs®, etc. For more information on these items, please visit:

www.paulrallion.com/#MyCOMPUTeachER

23.- Learn to Use a Word Processor:

Use a word processor such as Microsoft Word®, or Google Document® to type your homework, reports, projects, etc. Save all these documents in a folder and revise and update for next year. One way to save your files to keep them organized is to name them starting with the date, for example:

20151026_HW-Photosynthesis.doc

24.- Use A Spell Checker:

A document with spelling errors has less credibility. Make sure you run a spell check and know some words that may not be picked up by a spell-checker.

25.- Commonly Misspelled words:

Learn how to spell words that are commonly misspelled, even with a spell-checker, and by highly educated people:

- Affect (This will not affect my plans),
- Effect (The effect on the Earth is great).
- Your (This is your car),
- You're (You're a nice person).
- There (The child is there),
- They're (They're being silly),
- Their (I like their sense of humor).
- To (I'd like to go to the movies),
- Too (This is good, too),
- Two (I'd like two of those).

26.- Do Not Plagiarize:

Plagiarizing is copying someone else's work. Do not do it. It can get you into a lot of trouble: from a failed assignment, to a failed class, to expulsion. There is a website that can help you avoid plagiarism: www.duplichecker.com

27.- Learn to Use Electronic Presentations:

Use a program to make electronic presentations, such as PowerPoint®, Keynote®, or Google Presentations® to prepare class project presentations. You can include short videos into your slides and make your presentation fancier. Consider using www.youtube.com/education. When

you make media-rich presentations, you increase the chances of engaging your audience.

28.- Use a Website or Blog:

Use a free website service online such as <http://education.weebly.com> or a free blog service online such as www.blogger.com to publish specific information about your assignments. Sometimes it may be helpful to post a homework assignment online for your teacher to view, especially if you're ill.

29.- Backup Your Files:

There are only a few things more frustrating than losing your computer files. Back them up frequently. Better yet, use a service online to backup your stuff. There are a few choices out there, but my two favorite services are www.Carbonite.com and www.Dropbox.com:

- With your Carbonite's paid subscription, you get an unlimited online automatic backup of your computer files. One of my favorite features is accessing my files online, or through my smartphone app.
- Dropbox is a free service that starts with 2GB of storage and syncs your files between your computers, tablets, and smart phones. You no longer need to transfer files between devices with a flash drive or via email. You can purchase extra storage,

or get additional free storage if you get your friends and family to sign up from your referral.

30.- Pretend Your Parents Are Watching:

Do not get caught saying or doing something you may regret later on. One way you can keep your behavior in check is this: pretend that your parents are there with you. I've had students who have been a behavior problem and their parents have asked to sit in class with them. The student behavior is great when the parent is there. Pretend your parents are there, watching you.

31.- Reflect:

Think about what you are doing now as a student and as a person. Is there anything you should do differently? How can you improve your performance? What's working now? What's not working?

32.- Do Not Procrastinate:

Do not leave things for the last minute! The more you leave things for later, the harder it is to catch up. Plan accordingly. Use your calendar to keep upcoming tasks in mind. It's better to do a little a day than a lot the day before things are due.

33.- In Danger of Failing:

If you are in danger of failing, or failing, start changing your habits now. The teachers will not change your grade or give you “extra credit” at the end of the semester. It will be too late. Start doing your work now!

34.- The Last Day of School:

The last day of school feels like finishing the brand-new notebook that was started on day one.

Hopefully it is filled with pages that reflect a positive year full of successes and experiences to learn from.

If you are in 8th grade, you’ll be participating in your culmination ceremony, a great day to celebrate. If you are not in 8th grade, it is still a good day to celebrate for finishing another school year, and to think of ways to have an even better school year upon your return.

Part IV: Outside of Class



35.- Walk on Your Right-Hand Side:

Year after year, when I supervise a staircase, and students accidentally bump into each other. Watch where you're going and use the conventional right-hand side.

36.- Don't Attract Negative Attention:

This may seem obvious, but there seems to be that one student who doesn't follow simple school rules:

get to school on time, do not forget your assignments, walk quietly in line, do not disrupt others, do not eat when not allowed, etc. Just follow your school rules to avoid negative attention.

37.- Get to Know Your Counselor:

You'd be surprised how many students don't know who their counselor is! Find out who it is, and be known to him or positive stuff, not as a troublemaker!

38.- Learn to Type Faster:

The QWERTY keyboard layout has prevailed the transition from the typewriter to the computer, and it won't go away anytime soon. Therefore, it is to anybody's advantage to master the art of typing. The faster you type, the faster you can get things done. Find a free typing course online and practice. The one I recommend is: www.goodtyping.com

39.- Save Eyesight:

Avoid looking at a computer monitor, smartphone screen, or TV monitor for extended periods of time. The first you should try to do is reduce the brightness of your devices. Lower the amount of light that your monitor emits, or the amount of light that hits your eyes! The same goes for your smartphone. Have you seen people texting on their

phone with what seems like a flashlight! Take breaks when you're at the computer, your smartphones, or even watching TV.

40.- Protect Your Family:

Don't get into trouble in school. Don't mistreat, damage, or vandalize school equipment. Your family is ultimately responsible to pay for the damages you cause. The same goes if you hurt another student. Your parents may be sued for medical bill if the case is serious enough. Save them from this kind of trouble; protect your family.

41.- Carry Something to Read:

Always have something to do: read or write. In other words, don't find yourself without anything to do.

Part V: Beyond School



42.- Start Saving Money:

I tell my students that they have time on their side. If they start saving a little bit of money every month, and are responsible to take care of it, they'll end up with quite a bit of money when they grow up. Have your parents open a bank account in your name and make sure you don't touch that money until you're an adult.

43.- Student Discounts:

As a member of a teacher union or as a school district employee, you may qualify for discounts in

entertainment or technology. For example, you may purchase anti-virus or productivity software at a great discount. Carry your student identification card with you and take advantage of those discounts. They can add up!

44.- Eating Habits:

Even if you weigh more than yesterday, do not skip meals, especially breakfast! The one meal you should eat less at is dinner. The idea is to eat more during the day so that you have the rest of the day to burn the calories consumed. The later in the day it is, the less you should eat!

45.- Stay Away from Sugary Drinks:

Stay away from sodas and sugary drinks. The sheer amount of sugar or substitutes should be enough of a deterrent. Sugar substitutes make it worse: high-fructose corn syrup contains artificial stuff that has been highly processed and genetically-modified.

46.- Exercise:

You may get enough exercise during physical education (PE) class, but when you don't, try to make it a point to work out. But don't use it as a remedy to counteract weight gain. You can't have bad eating habits and then burn the calories by exercise. You need to do both: eat well and exercise.

By the way, if you hear about an object, a drug, or a machine that will help you “lose weight fast, without any effort,” stay away from them. You can’t fool your body. If it sounds too good to be true, it is too good to be true

47.- Sleeping Habits:

Sleep the number of hours that are recommended according to your age. If you find yourself awake in the middle of the night, and can’t fall back asleep, try this: close your eyes, relax, and feel your body getting lighter, and lighter, as if it was turning into a sheet of paper. Slowly concentrate that you weigh less and less, in falling asleep.

48.- Dress Appropriately:

I learned from an early age to wear ironed clothes and match them correctly. For example, wear colors that go well together, and wear a belt that is the same color as your shoes.

49.- Be Polite:

This is good advice inside school as well as outside. Be polite to others and people will be polite to you. For example, when you go to the bank and approach the bank teller, say “good morning” or “good afternoon” and smile!

50.- Social Media:

Be careful with social media: the information becomes public, and if it's spicy enough, it may go "viral." Use common sense when uploading stuff online. Keep in mind that once you upload a picture online you have no control over it!

Bonus Tip: Learn to Say "No"

Learning to say no is an important part of growing up, especially when offered a temptation. If a friend offers you drugs, say no. You don't have to do what others do. Don't start smoking; it's very hard to quit. I wrote a book on smoking - you can preview it at www.paulrallion.com. If something doesn't feel right, just say no!

Conclusion

Middle School is a difficult period of time for students. Many students who did not behave in my class came back to see me during their high school years and actually have apologized for misbehaving. Save yourself this embarrassment and do the right thing, all the time, even if nobody is watching.

About the Author

I have worked in the field of education for over 20 years. I started as a teacher's assistant, then as a computer lab and science lab instructor. I have taught science, math, and now computer technology. I also taught English as a second language (ESL) and then computer literacy to adults at night school. I earned my master's degree in Education in 2003, and my National Board Certification for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in 2006.

Preview and purchase his books at: PaulRallion.com

1. California Missions, Visiting All 21 (available in Spanish),
2. Visiting Yosemite, Sequoia, Kings Canyon, and Central California,
3. Languages of the America (available in Spanish, French, and Portuguese),
4. My COMPUTeachER, The Computer Book for Everyone,
5. Money & Credit 101 (available in Spanish),

6. Middle School Parents (available in Spanish),
7. Middle School 101, 101 Tips for Teachers,
8. Middle School 201, More Tips for Teachers,
9. Tips for Life, 101 Ways to Live Better,
10. Kick Smokin', One Butt at a Time (available in Spanish, French, and Portuguese),
11. Middle Schoolin', 50 Stories about the Challenges, Humor and Rewards of Teaching,
12. Turning Point, Free Education for the Willing,
13. Middle Schoolers, 50 Tips for Students (Free download).



PaulRallion.com

