

I have a hard time believing it's time to send you off to the wilds of middle school, but here we are, my friend. It seems like just yesterday your aunts and I sat on the back porch with you, making felt flowers and blinging out your backpack for kindergarten. But this time, instead of sending you off with homemade flowers, I'm sending you off with advice from some friends. Our friends. Tons of great people we know from near and far. Tons of people who have walked this walk before and who were willing to share what they wish they knew before they started middle school. So instead of hearing a boatload of advice from your boring old mom, you can take it from a bunch of other smart, cool, super-wise people. **Pretty much everything they said holds true for your dad and me, too. So here's what I wish I would have known before I started middle school. (And here's what we all want you to know):**

You are smart and funny, caring, thoughtful, beautiful and brave. You have always been compassionate insightful and responsible. Just bring those things and everything else you have to share and you will be just fine. Middle school is big and fun and new, exciting and kind of confusing sometimes. Some big changes ahead. Lots of new friends, teachers, activities, choices. Guess what? Everyone around you is growing and changing at different paces and experiencing a lot of the same things as you, so don't worry, you are not alone! Make new friends (*but keep the old, one is silver and the other's gold*) that are as awesome as you and talk about what you are feeling and going through...I bet they can relate! Keep your chin up. Three important things I learned from my three awesome older sisters before starting middle school: 1. Be kind even when those around you are not - you won't be sorry. 2. Go with your gut; if something doesn't feel right, it's probably not & may get you in trouble. 3. Don't bother with boys who act like jerks even if you think they are cute. When in doubt, call an aunt. You rock, and you are so incredibly loved. -Aunt Katie | **THERE WILL BE KIDS THAT MAKE FUN OF OTHER KIDS AND TRY TO 'SEEM' COOL AND TRY TOO HARD TO FIT IN -- THEY ARE USUALLY MISSING SOMETHING IN THEIR LIFE. DON'T CHANGE WHO YOU ARE FOR ANYONE. ALWAYS BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.** -UNCLE WILL | I wish I hadn't 'ditched' my little sister in favor of school friends during middle school. God had given me a built-in BFF! - Stacey Ferguson, JusticeFergie.com | **There will be moments that your world may seem like it's ending. It's not. These years are but a blip in the awesomeness of your life that is to come.** -Erin Lane, AParentingProduction.com | Kids can be mean. Stay strong and no matter what--Be Yourself. -Teri Edwards | I wish I had known that some of my friends would pull away from me when we got into middle school, and it was going to hurt. A lot. And sometimes middle schoolers can be just plain mean....which is especially hard when the meanness is coming from some of those former friends. I wish I had known that the meanness was more about them and not so much about me. I wish I had known that if I could just hold on, that things would be brighter and get better. And I would find new, wonderful friends...many of whom would still be my friends when I am old and gray! -Lauri Black | Find a passion outside of school. I didn't have a great group of friends in middle school--they were flakey and fickle, but I did have a lot of success with sports. I didn't put all my energy into maintaining social relationships--I worked at other things and got a sense of fulfillment from my work on the soccer field and lacrosse field. I didn't judge my worth by what my friends thought of me. I'd like to think the current WORLD CHAMP TEAM USA GIRLS felt the same. They probably had little time for time-sucking social dynamics. Find something outside of school (could be church, music, acting, collecting fossils) that makes you feel vibrant and happy. If you wait on others to validate you and make you feel successful it could be a very, very long wait. Oh, and don't buy shoes thinking you'll break them in--you never will. You'll just get blisters and miss out on the fun. -Nicole Feliciano, CEO Momtrends Media. | Teenage boys will say anything VERY convincingly to get what their crazy stupid hormones want. And your crazy stupid hormones will want to believe it. Don't. - Bon Crowder, MathFour.com ♥ **DON'T get a radical hair cut. You will never regret standing by a friend, but you will always regret NOT doing the right thing. Remove yourself from drama, and have friends outside of school.** -Rebecca Levy, KidZVUZ.COM ♥ These next few years you will be faced with a lot of change; you, your friends, expectations, school, etc. The person sitting next to you will be faced with similar challenges. You are never alone. Talk with someone who will listen and be there to support you. -Christine Quinn | *The only thing I really remember about middle school is that I was tiny, a late bloomer and had no idea what the more developed girls were talking about half of the time. I longed to be cool and taller! I only wish I would have known I would grow taller than everyone else a few years later. LOL! So maybe my input would be, no matter where you are in the girly development phase... we're all in the same boat together soon enough. Enjoy your childhood years as long as you can! There's nothing wrong with taking your time to grow up. Just be confident and act like you know what's going on... even if you really don't:-) FYI - I still take this advice. Half of the time, I don't know what I'm doing. ha!* -Amy Locurto, LivingLocurto.com | **Be nice to your teachers! They are moms, dads, sisters and brothers who have feelings too.** -Meredith Gordon Donate | **Always remember that you're never too old for a kiss and a hug to your mom and dad Before and after school.** -Audrey McClelland, MomGenerations.com | **Be YOU! The next few years those around you in middle school will be discovering just exactly they think they are. Friends will get closer and friends will**

pull away sometimes even within the same day. Stay true to the person you know you are and how your parents have raised you to be. Find ways to express your talents and discover more about yourself through clubs, school projects, volunteering and activities outside of school. Always know that your Mom and Dad believe in you and think you a rockstar! -Kim Vij, [The Educators' Spin On It](#) | Drink lots of water and get into a beauty routine that involves washing your face before bed.... puberty might make your skin a hot mess for the next few years, just know you're not alone! also.... call your aunts at any time of any day for any reason whatsoever.... i promise we'll be here for you. -Aunt Jenny | I loved elementary school. What I didn't realize and I wish someone had told me is that I would love the middle school years even more! -Grandpa | It's a tough time in your life not sure what you are feeling and why. Talk to your parents about those feelings. They can help and do understand for they were once your age. Be yourself!! -Sara Collins Carlson | LATER, WHEN YOU TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL, YOU'LL BE SURPRISED AT JUST HOW MANY OF THEM FELT AWKWARD AND UNCOMFORTABLE AND LIKE THEY DIDN'T FIT IN. EVEN THE "COOL KIDS." YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN WHATEVER YOU'RE FEELING. -CHRISTIE MATTE, [QUIRKYFUSION.COM](#) | Don't dwell on people that don't like you, instead, remember that there's plenty of people out there that will like you for who you are. In addition, I wish I'd participated more in school activities. And last, have a code with your parents so that you can tell them anything and you won't get in trouble. -Jackie Silver Confrey, [Amazing Life Lessons With Jackie](#) | Don't worry about what other people are thinking about you. They aren't! They are only thinking about themselves. -Candice Kilpatrick, [MomMostTraveled.com](#) | Consider a pen pal. Perhaps a friend that moved away or a childhood friend you trust. Someone who may not go to your school but who you can be open and honest with. If not to someone, perhaps to a diary. Write about the little things that excite you or that bother you. The littlest of things may just be the biggest to you at the time. Sharing your experiences with someone you trust can help with the journey. -Liz Deery | I wish I had known what a great resource teachers could have been. My friends bonded with some of our teachers and got a lot of support, but I was always too shy. Also, don't assume it's going to be awful! There's a danger of the self-fulfilling prophecy with so many people talking about how awful middle school is -Kakki Reynolds Lewis, [KatherineLewis.com](#) | The kids who are cool in middle school are rarely the kids who are cool as grown ups. Doesn't make it any easier I know, but your day will come!!! -Danica Kombol, [Everywhere Agency](#) | Try your best to be nice... Even when it feels hard ...be a loyal friend... Don't keep secrets from mom and dad and follow your heart. Fitting in isn't as important as being yourself, although that's hard to understand now. Being you is the best part about being you! -Jennifer Flamish Lang | 1. You are loved. 2. You have boundaries because you are loved and we want the best for you. Experience is "a" teacher, not the "best" teacher. 3. Choose friends wisely. It takes time to make "good" friends. Don't rush it. Watch a "friends" behavior over time. 4. Be a good friend. Stand up for what is right even when it's not popular. 5. Stay connected to family (including siblings). 6. Mommy and Daddy are praying for you everyday. You are smart. You are kind. You are beautiful. -Kinta Jones, Mom of 3 (rising 9th grader, 7th grader, and 5th grader) | To not worry about being in with the cool crowd- look for friends who are your friend for you and stand by you! -Melissa Northway, [DandelionMoms.com](#) | Yes, you will meet new friends, but it won't be a chore. Yes, there will be the popular crowd, which my children never strived to be in. It all comes in time! You will meet good friends. They will be friends throughout high school. -Jodi Siarkas, [JodiSiarkas.com](#) | LEARN EVERYTHING YOU CAN ABOUT HORMONES BECAUSE THEY ARE ABOUT TO RUN YOUR LIFE. PRAY FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR MOMMA TOO! -DONNE ´ ALLEN | When you kiss someone for the first time it will be wet and awkward. Afterward, your heart will flutter a bit. It is normal. Boys and girls can be mean. Sometimes boys say mean things because they think you are cute and don't know what to say. Girls tend to be mean because they are insecure. It is difficult to understand this when you are experiencing it, but true. -Christine Quinn | Friendships may wax and wane. Your best friends, or your whole circle, may change, or not. Don't be afraid to reach out and make new friends, or try something new. A new school offers a great chance to do that. What seems normal for everyone else may not be normal for you. The other kids are rarely what they appear to be anyway. They just look like they have it more together from the outside. Most people have the same insecurities and just want to be liked. People will remember your kindness, and you will be rewarded for it. (Having had a child enter middle school, high school and college, this is pretty much the advice I have given and that has been acted upon. It holds for every transition.) -Suz Lipman, [SLOW FAMILY ONLINE](#) | Remember that you're a team--mom and dad are all going to Middle School for the first time. Good friends can be males or females. Girls tend to be more wicked in MS than at any other time in their lives. Boys need a friend who's a girl to let them know when they're being gross. Be nice to the caf ladies--It may mean some extra fries.. A please and thank you will go a long way! Always pack your things the night before. Even plan what you'll be wearing the next day. Getting up in the morning is difficult enough! The last thing you will want to do is be running around looking for things in the morning! Don't make your parents have to bring something you forgot into school! Don't be afraid to be a leader. Sometimes, you may need to be a follower. Never, ever, ever follow, when you know you should be leading! Be nice to the custodians... They are the ones who'll open your jammed locker. If you see a piece of paper on the floor, pick it up! Be nice to the secretaries. They will lend you lunch money if you forget your money on the kitchen table! Just be nice to everyone. Just enjoy school and your life! As it is said, "You'll never pass this way again." – Carolyn Roman, Spanish teacher 38 years