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**Listening Activities for Middle School**

[](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/8398~michele-meleen)

By [Michele Meleen](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/8398~michele-meleen)M.S. Ed

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The [National Capital Language Resource Center](http://www.nclrc.org/essentials/listening/goalslisten.htm) explains that effective listening incorporates the ability to comprehend spoken words and separate relevant from irrelevant information. Listening is an active process people use daily and teaching these skills will help students in preparation for life outside of school. These five activities are infused with fun and motivation to encourage participation.

**Knock, Knock. Who's There?**

In this class activity, students will be challenged to recognize the voices of classmates. What's great is that this activity only requires paper and pencil.

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* [Educational Games for Middle School Kids](https://kids.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Educational_Games_for_Middle_School_Kids)

**Instructions**

1. Have students take out a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Ask students to number their paper to 10.
2. Select three students to come to the front of the classroom. All other students should then lay their heads down on their desks with eyes closed.
3. Using fingers, express to one of the selected students he is first and another selected student that he is second.
4. The first selected student will then say "Knock, knock" and the second student will respond with "Who's there?"
5. Send the selected students back to their seats then direct the rest of the class to open their eyes and write down the name of the student who said each phrase.
6. Continue playing in this fashion until all students have been called to the front and 10 rounds have been played.
7. The student with the most correct answers at the end is the winner.

For added difficulty, allow students to disguise their voices. Another fun modification might be to instruct speakers to do a celebrity impersonation when saying their phrases. Guessing students will not only have to identify the classmate speaking, but also the celebrity they are impersonating.

**Word Count**

A great way to get kids actively listening to videos, guest presentations or classmate speeches is to incorporate a keyword counting challenge. This activity can be modified to include media by using popular songs or fun, educational cartoons.

**Preparations**

* Choose the format for information presentation (lecture, video, etc.).
* Select three or four keywords and count how many times they appear in the presentation. Write each keyword on a few index cards.

**Instructions**

1. Hand each student a card or slip of paper with a keyword listed. Multiple students will have the same keyword.
2. Instruct students to listen for this keyword and make a note of how many times they hear the word.
3. At the end of the activity, ask all students with the same keyword to form a group. If they have different answers, students must attempt to persuade the entire group that their answer is correct.
4. Each group must form a consensus and submit a final answer. The group(s) with the correct answer wins.

**The Last Word**

Multi-tasking is an essential element of effective listening. Similar to a common improvisation activity, this game challenges students to listen to classmates while also preparing a relevant statement in their head. Small or large groups can easily play 'The Last Word.'

**Preparation**

Choose a topic such as in the jungle, prehistoric life, an episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants*, or a new Justin Bieber song.

**Instructions**

1. Select an order by handing out numbers or base your order on the seating arrangements.
2. The first player must walk to the front of the room and say one sentence that relates to the chosen topic.
3. The next player must immediately walk to the front of the room and say one sentence that starts with the last word said by the player immediately before them.
4. Play continues until all students have had a turn. If a student is unable to come up with an appropriate sentence within ten seconds, he is out of the game.
5. Game play continues in this fashion until there is only one student left and he is the winner.

**Series of Sound**

Using everyday items, teachers can incorporate hidden sounds into any lesson. Students will be challenged to listen for, draw, and repeat a series of common sounds. The concept may sound simple, but students will be surprised at how much they normally tune out.

[](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/image/207046~Boy-Drawing.jpg)

**Preparation**

* Bring in everyday objects such as a stapler, book, paper, or something similar.
* Be sure to have a variety of items on hand to make noise with. It will be helpful to plan a series of sounds to make during the lesson. For example, a series might include banging a book on the desk, stomping your foot, clapping your hands, stapling papers, whistling, and clicking keyboard keys.

**Instructions**

1. Instruct students to listen for sounds made only by the teacher during the lesson or class period.
2. Every time a student hears a new sound, she should draw a picture of the item that made the sound.
3. At the end of the lesson, allow each student the opportunity to gather all items she drew and recreate the series of sounds in order.
4. The student(s) with the correct series of sounds win.

**Banana Split**

A take on the game [Screaming Viking](http://www.group-games.com/stationary-games/screaming-viking.html), students will need to listen for directions in a chaotic environment and follow those directions. A gym or large, open space is required for playing this active game.

**Instructions**

1. All players will run around the room as they would if they were playing tag.
2. When the teacher yells out one of the commands, each student must assume the correct position before the teacher counts to ten.
3. The commands and actions are:
   * "Ice cream" - players must push hands in front of their body as if scooping giant scoops of ice cream
   * "Banana" - players start with hands together above head in a triangular shape then peel down one hand at a time
   * "Cherry" - players curl up in a ball on the floor with one hand extended above their head
   * "Banana Split" - three players must join together and, standing next to each other, each take a different one of the three individual roles (one scooper, one peeling banana, and one cherry)
4. If a student chooses the wrong position or a group is unable to form the Banana Split, those players are out of the game.
5. The last player or trio standing wins the game.

**Simple Listening Activities**

There are many activities that focus on different aspects of listening. These activities require little prep and can be done when you have a quick five to ten-minute break.

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**Telephone:** The classic game where students form a line, and each person whispers a message to the next until the last person says the message out loud. The goal is to have the first person and the last person say the exact same message, but it often gets reworded.

* **Follow the Directions:** This activity can be done in pairs or a large group. One person gives short, simple instructions and the other(s) must draw according to the directions they hear.
* **Simon Says:** Although this is typically a game for younger children, it can be adapted to older kids by incorporating more complex or silly directives. For example, "Simon says repeatedly high five your neighbor."
* **Blindfold Obstacle Course:** One student is blindfolded and must follow the directions of a partner to move through an obstacle course.
* **Follow the Leader:** Blindfold one person. Have the other students should line up. The blindfolded person should give directions and everyone else must follow them.
* **Copycat Rhythm:** Kids must listen to a rhythm clapped or tapped out and then repeat it perfectly. To make this game age appropriate, use complex patterns or unique instruments.
* **Stand up/Sit down:** Instruct students to stand up or sit down, whichever is the opposite of their current position, every time they hear a specific word, phrase, or sound during a prepared lesson or speech.

**Active Listening**

True listening involves opening the ears, mind, and heart. Most people have no problem hearing what others are saying, but listening is an acquired skill. Fun, engaging activities can help get middle school students motivated to learn what listening means.

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**Motivation and Middle School Children**

[](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/1774~s-zeiger)

By [Stacy Zeiger](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/1774~s-zeiger)Teacher and Mentor

[](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/image/68549~Middle_school_girl.jpg)

Dealing with motivation and middle school children can sometimes be a challenge. These formative years bring a lot of changes to kids' lives, and it can be hard to know what types of activities and knowledge will keep them motivated. However, with the right ingredients and an understanding of how children see the world during their middle school years, you will find ways to encourage kids to go the extra distance.

**A Big Transition**

Making the transition from elementary school to middle school is often difficult simply because of what is required of students. While some elementary schools ease students into this transition, most require students to go from sitting in one class for the entire day to rotating classes, learning how handle multiple teachers and navigating a much larger school. They may also be accountable for meeting standards that are more difficult and have fewer opportunities to get one-on-one help to meet these tougher standards.

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According to the [American Psychological Association](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/middle-school.aspx), students face a drop in grades from middle school to elementary school and this may come from a lack of self-assuredness, an increase in competition and the transition in general. The APA also notes that it is important to take action immediately when a middle schooler's grades start to drop in order to prevent a downward spiral.

**Ways to Motivate Middle Schoolers**

The Association for Middle Level Education offers multiple ways to take action and motivate middle school students in its regular publication Middle Ground and through regular research studies. A few of the main suggestions from the AMLE are:

* [Have faith](http://www.amle.org/Publications/MiddleGround/Articles/April2011/Article2/tabid/2370/Default.aspx) in middle school students to help rebuild the lack of self-esteem they face.
* [Build a personal relationship](http://www.amle.org/Publications/MiddleGround/Articles/April2011/Article3/tabid/2371/Default.aspx) with middle school students.
* [Set high expectations](http://www.amle.org/Research/ResearchSummaries/Motivating/tabid/2635/Default.aspx) for students and connect learning to their interests.

**Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation**

Middle school students must be motivated by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Teachers and parents can offer physical rewards for students, such as offering points toward a larger reward, free time or being able to participate in a special event. They can also give positive praise and encouragement, pats on the back and a high five to motivate students. However, students also need to learn to motivate themselves. This can be done by teaching middle school students to set goals and reach them and letting them experience success in small amounts to build their confidence.

**The Power of Friends**

Friends also play a large role in motivating middle schoolers. According to the [APA](http://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug04/friendships.aspx), having friends is crucial to success in middle school. Psychologist Erik Erikson also explains the power of friendships in middle school. In his [eight stages of development](http://web.cortland.edu/andersmd/erik/sum.html), [peer relationships](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Statistics_on_Peer_Pressure) are the most important focus for children from 12 to 18 years old. Having friends helps a middle schooler develop self-confidence and begin to form an identity.

**What Teachers Can Do**

Teachers play a huge role in motivating middle school students. The way they present information in the classroom and how they interact with middle schoolers has a direct effect on performance.

**Making it Relevant**

Middle schoolers have a "me" mentality, so instruction must answer the question, "why is this important to me?" or "how does this relate to my world?" Teachers can accomplish this by getting to know students' interests and incorporating them into the curriculum. They can also bring real-life examples and stories into the classroom to help pique student interest.

Relevance is particularly important in the areas of in science and math, especially when it comes to girls. During the middle school years, girls often lose interest in science and math. According to a study by the [University of Michigan](http://ns.umich.edu/new/releases/20355-my-fair-physicist-feminine-math-science-role-models-do-not-motivate-girls), this is partly because girls do not see a connection between being feminine and being a successful scientist. A report from the [Girl Scout Research Institute](http://www.girlscouts.org/research/pdf/generation_stem_full_report.pdf) found that in order for science and math instruction to be effective for girls, it needed to:

* Provide a lot of hands-on activities
* Emphasize how science can help people
* Provide examples of females who have been successful in scientific careers

**Making it Entertaining**

While a teacher's main goal is not to entertain students, middle school students cannot be expected to sit in their seats and take notes for an entire class period or participate in the same activities day after day. Teachers must make the classroom entertaining and engaging by allowing students to participating in a variety of hands-on activities, giving them opportunities to talk about what they're learning or work with their peers and regularly introduce new activities. Bringing technology in the classroom through web 2.0 applications, games and interactive white boards can also make learning more engaging and interesting for middle school students.

**What Parents Can Do**

Even though they do not have as much influence as peers, parents can still play a role in motivating their middle schoolers. The [APA](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/middle-school.aspx) offers three pieces of advice to help parent motivate middle school students:

* Encourage children to try new things
* Let them know failure is okay, if they try
* Remind them that learning takes effort

In addition, parents can help prepare their middle schooler for success by providing systems of organization, teaching study skills and offering rewards for good performance. Regularly talking to your middle schooler and listening when there is a problem will help you recognize and support your middle schooler when problems arise.

**Pay Attention**

Pay attention to your children or students and watch for the signs of a decrease in motivation. Dr. Robert Balfanz, an educational researcher suggests paying attention to the [ABCs of middle school syndrome](http://www.ed.gov/blog/2011/05/recognizing-education%E2%80%99s-middle-school-syndrome/): absenteeism, behavioral problems and course performance. The earlier you catch a problem and take action, the less likely it is to affect the rest of your child's middle school years and further education.

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**Reading Strategies for Middle School Students**

[](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/69~charlotte-gerber)

By [Charlotte Gerber](https://www.lovetoknow.com/member/69~charlotte-gerber)

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Reading strategies for middle school students can help students in their studies across the board. Middle school students are preparing for high school work, which will require considerably more reading and good comprehension skills. It is therefore important to learn about effective reading strategies for both students and teachers.

**Current Reading Strategies for Middle School Students**

The following strategies have been recommended by [AdLit.org](http://www.adlit.org/), a reading literacy resource for parents and educators. These strategies can help students improve their reading skills and comprehension in all of their school subjects.

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* [Parent Literacy Nights](https://kids.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Parent_Literacy_Nights)

**Effective Comprehension Strategies**

Many children can read quickly, or finish lengthy books. This doesn't mean that they have understood what they have read. As students are developing their reading skills, they also need to learn how to remember what they have read. Teachers can assist their students in acquiring the necessary comprehension strategies in the classroom. Students who learn these strategies can finish their work more quickly and retain the information they have read longer. According to the [National Reading Panel](http://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/ch4-III1.pdf), the following comprehension strategies can help students become better readers:

* Active comprehension monitoring, which leads to strategies for better understanding of the reading material. Know what the student has read and have a strategy planned for better understanding of the concepts presented in the text.
* Use of graphic organizers, which illustrates interrelationships between concepts and semantic organizers, which link a central concept to related ideas
* Question generation
* Summarizing and paraphrasing - have the student discuss what they have read in their own words
* Selective re-reading

**Increase Discussion of Reading Content**

The discussion of a book can help students understand the material that they have read. This type of discussion can be teacher-guided, student-led small groups, or between parents and their children. It is believed that the discussion will increase children's analytical skills and encourage them to be readers that are more thoughtful. When parents become involved in their child's education, they can help their student in this area of reading as well. Read the same books that your children are reading and engage them in a discussion about these books. Children will be more likely to do the required reading if their parents are also reading the same book.

**Maintain High Standards**

Teachers can help to create an environment in which children strive to do their very best. Teachers, who set high standards for literacy outcomes, especially in the areas of reading, discussion, questions and vocabulary, usually have high-achieving classrooms. This can be done by clearly stating what is expected of the students in their classroom. Posters or [bulletin boards](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Back_to_School_Bulletin_Boards)are good places to list these expectations.Parents can help to maintain high reading standards by requiring their children to set aside time for reading each day, including on the weekend.

**Increase Students' Motivation**

One of the most important reading strategies for middle school students is to increase a students' motivation to read. Reading comprehension, discussion and high standards won't help a student to excel in reading if they aren't motivated to read in the first place. Students can be encouraged to read more if the text they are reading from is at the correct reading level for them. Nothing is more discouraging than to constantly struggle with the reading material. Students that learn to read from text at the appropriate level will become readers that are more confident and will therefore excel.

**Increase Vocabulary**

It is no secret that a large and varied [vocabulary](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Middle_School_Word_Problems) can help students become better readers and challenge them to read increasingly difficult text. The current recommendation from the National Reading Panel is to increase vocabulary in the following ways:

* Provide a wide selection of reading material
* Direct teaching of individual, high-utility words
* Instruction on how to learn words independently while reading
* Instruction and activities to increase word consciousness

Activities can include spelling bees, correct use of the word(s) of the day, vocabulary quizzes and students using dictionaries at their desk while reading. Students can look up words they are not familiar with and keep a [journal](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/High_School_Journal_Topics) of these words for future reference. Parents can help their children by having current dictionaries available to them while reading at home.

Students who are able to comprehend their reading assignments easily know how to apply learned reading strategies to all of their studies. When students are taught reading strategies in middle school, they have a better chance of reading success in high school and beyond.

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5. [Small Pets](https://small-pets.lovetoknow.com/)

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1. [Puberty Stages for Boys](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Slideshow:Male_Puberty_Stages_in_Photos)
2. [Life as a Young Teenager](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Young_Teenager_Pics)
3. [Petite Teenagers' Fashion Gallery](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Petite_Teenagers_Gallery)
4. [Gallery of Mini Skirt Style Ideas](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Slideshow:Mini_Skirt_Gallery)
5. [Teenage Girls' Bedroom Ideas](https://teens.lovetoknow.com/Teenage_Girls_Bedrooms)

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