

1. Informal Talks on Interests and Skills



In middle school, youth are beginning to explore their own interests and learn about jobs and careers. Start a conversation with your youth using the questions below. While you talk, highlight skills like problem-solving, teamwork, and persisting through frustration and hardship. Take the opportunity to talk about the skills your young person needs for their hobbies or interests.

- What was challenging today? What did you do? Who did you help today? How?
- What problems did you solve today? Who helped you solve the problem?
- What skills do you need to be good at your particular hobby (video games, sports, art or drawing, etc.)?

2. Compare Experiences

Highlight generational, or even multigenerational, differences and experiences your middle schooler sees and turn them into an opportunity to discuss careers. A prompt like Back in My Day gives you a chance to share an experience or tool that has changed significantly over time. Look around your house for recent inventions or technology, such as the telephone or computer. Discuss what came before that invention with parents, grandparents, and children! Then, use the internet to research what careers are required to build a similar invention.

3. Read Books

Visit the library with your young person and read books that focus on their interests or discuss overcoming challenges or solving a problem. Books about historical people, such as Hidden Figures, offer diverse stories that may resonate with your child. Ask your middle schooler questions about the type of work the characters do, the skills involved, and how they solve problems.

4. STEM Activities at Home

Working on STEM activities as a family is a fun way to build skills that will be important to your child no matter what path they take in life! Check out these examples:

- Engineering is Everywhere for Families - You can work with the children in your life (especially those aged 4–11) to design your own solutions to our challenges. Also includes a parent letter in English and Spanish and Family Events Toolkit in English and Spanish to help organize events.
- Try out careers together with RoadTrip Nation. Explore different career road trips and then work with your middle schooler to create a career roadmap based on their interests.

5. Careers in the Wild

Help your young person to interview friends, coaches, and other family members about their jobs and careers. Your young person can ask questions like:

- What do you like most about your job/career? What do you like least?
- How did you choose your career? What skills do you use most often in your work?
- What would you tell your middle school self to keep doing, or start doing, to prepare for your job/career?

