

# Summer Genius Hour Activities for Your Middle Schooler

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Summer time is the perfect time for your middle schooler to unwind, relax, and catch up with some sleep! While it is developmentally appropriate for your young teen to take a mental break from academic studies, the summer also opens the doors for gaining new skills, exploring new interests, and giving back to the community. In this second part of a three-part “Summer Opportunities for Your Middle Schooler” series, we will focus on the benefits of Genius Hour activities.

### What Is a Genius Hour?

Genius Hour refers to a project that your child might take on in order to explore and inquire about topics that inspire mental intrigue or to deepen their understanding on a topic. As the name implies, the goal of the Genius Hour project is to spend one hour a day over a length of time delving into their project. In a classroom setting, a teacher may set parameters and may even make it a collaborative group project,



but a Genius Hour summer time project is easy to modify for personal purposes. Middle schoolers will be more empowered in choosing their own topic, be more engaged in their project, and will be more independent with a self-directed learning path.

## What Can Your Child Research?

To start a Genius Hour project, invite your middle schooler to think about something fascinating they may have come across in the past year that they might want to learn more about. Help your child to develop a guiding question and to think about what their final outcome might be. Then help them create a timeline to guide their summer progress. Finally, find ways to support their learning. This may include suggesting appropriate online tutorials, taking them to the library for research, visiting museum exhibits, or attending creative events.

## How to Formulate a Question to Study

For example, my children and I attended a Young Authors Book Festival where an author presented his book and mentioned that all the illustrations were done using computer software. Since the idea of creating drawings using computer software was new to my kids, that sparked an interest in learning how to create computer graphics. Their Genius Hour's guiding question is "How can I create my own original digital drawings to accompany the stories I write?" and the final outcome of their project would be to write a short story and produce their own

original, digital drawings. Their process will include following some online tutorials and checking in their progress with their father, who is a Graphic Designer.

## Brainstorm Areas of Interest to Explore

What might intrigue your middle schooler to start a Genius Hour project? Some may want to learn for personal gain while others may have personal observations that might lead to projects with practical application. Here are some sample guiding questions.

How can middle school students reduce food waste during lunch?

How do you create a webpage or a website?

How can I bring more awareness to my peers about the health dangers of smoking and vaping?

What are some basic self-defense maneuvers and can that be taught during a physical education class as a learning unit?

What are some before, during, and afterschool activities that are inclusive, create school spirit, and are cost effective?

What is the best free-throw technique in basketball and will that technique help me improve my free-throw average?

## Have Fun

Embrace this time of curiosity and creativity in your middle schooler and see where their inquiring minds will take them!

Did your child do a Genius Hour project? Drop a quick note and share!

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