

Help Your Middle Schooler **Think Before Asking AI**

**FREE
PREVIEW**

A practical guide for parents to raise kids who use AI safely, think critically, and stay creative.



Chris Pinas

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CHRISPY *Learning*

A short look inside the guide

Thank you for reading this preview of *Help Your Middle Schooler Think Before Asking AI*, a practical guide for parents, caregivers and educators of children roughly ages 11 to 14. The guide doesn't start with how to use AI for homework. It starts with why your child's own thinking matters.



THE CORE MESSAGE

AI can help your child learn, but it should never replace your child's thinking.

In these pages you'll find the thinking behind the Think First approach: why AI isn't always the answer, what a short pause before reaching for a tool can do, and an everyday example of the difference between avoiding a tool and thinking first. The complete guide then turns these ideas into a practical routine for real homework.

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AI isn't always the answer.

AI can be useful. But not every question needs AI, and not every difficult assignment needs another technological tool.

Sometimes your child needs to think a little longer.

Sometimes the answer is already in the textbook.

Sometimes class notes are enough.

Sometimes the best person to ask is a parent or teacher.

And sometimes, when it is allowed and genuinely useful, AI can help.

Different kinds of help

◆ Independent thinking

Thinking a little longer

◆ Existing resources

The textbook or class notes

◆ Another person

A parent or teacher

◆ A tool

AI, when it is allowed and genuinely useful



KEY IDEA

The important skill is knowing the difference.



TRY THIS

Next time homework stalls, look at these four kinds of help together, and ask which one fits this moment before anyone opens a tool.

IN SHORT

- ✓ Not every question needs AI, and not every difficult assignment needs another tool.
- ✓ Thinking a little longer, class materials and people are kinds of help too.
- ✓ The skill is choosing the help that fits the moment.

Think First

Before reaching for a tool, give thinking a chance.

When a child gets stuck, the quickest solution isn't always the best learning solution. The Think First approach helps families create a small but important pause before the next move.

That pause can help your child ask:

1 Do I understand what I'm being asked to do?

2 What do I already know?

3 Can I make a first attempt?

4 Do I actually need help?

And if help is needed:

What kind of help would be most useful right now?

Sometimes the answer will be AI. Sometimes it won't.



KEY IDEA

The goal is not to make AI part of every learning moment. The goal is to help your child make better learning decisions.



SAY THIS

"Before you ask AI, tell me what you think so far, even if you're unsure."



WHAT RESEARCH SAYS

Trying before getting help pays off, even when the attempt is wrong. In studies of the "pretesting effect," learners who first attempted questions they couldn't yet answer remembered the material better afterward than learners who only studied it.¹

¹ Richland, L. E., Kornell, N., & Kao, L. S. (2009). The pretesting effect: Do unsuccessful retrieval attempts enhance learning? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 15(3), 243–257.

Intellectual independence in practice

Not avoiding the tool, but thinking first. A simple example with a calculator.

Not the goal: Technological independence

Never using the tool.

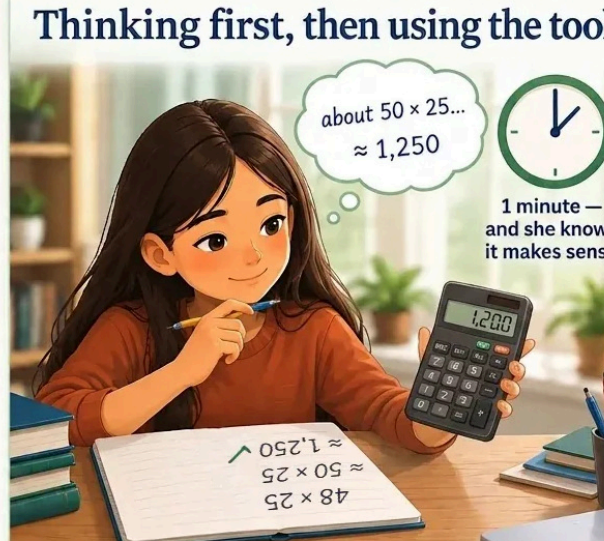


20 minutes... and still unsure

Rina has a calculator, but refuses to touch it. She spends twenty minutes on 48×25 by hand, gets stuck, and still isn't sure her answer is right. Avoiding the tool doesn't make her a better thinker.

The goal: Intellectual independence

Thinking first, then using the tool.



1 minute — and she knows it makes sense

Rina first thinks: “about 50×25 , so roughly 1,250.” Then she uses the calculator: 1,200. That fits, so she trusts it. If it had said 120, she would have noticed the mistake right away.



KEY IDEA

The difference isn't whether the tool is used. It's who does the thinking.

NOT THIS

A child who needs a tool because they no longer know how to start on their own.

BUT THIS

A child who chooses a tool because they know it's useful for this task.

The goal is intellectual independence

Your child doesn't need to know every answer from memory. But your child should gradually develop the ability to figure things out.

The goal is not technological independence, as if your child should never use a calculator, the internet, or AI. The goal is intellectual independence: a child who chooses a tool because they know it's useful for the task, not a child who needs a tool because they no longer know how to start on their own.

And the real goal is not only that tonight's homework gets done. It is that your child gradually learns to think, reason, solve problems, judge information, and learn independently.

“

We are not raising children who know how to get answers from AI. We are helping raise children who know how to think, learn, solve problems and find answers — and who can use AI intelligently when it genuinely helps them.

Chris Pinas

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THIS BOOK

From consumers to creators.

Encourage children to create with their own minds and abilities, both offline and digitally, instead of becoming dependent on technology for every idea.

IN SHORT

- ✓ Your child doesn't need to avoid technology, or depend on it.
- ✓ The goal: a child who chooses tools, not a child who needs them.
- ✓ When thinking comes first, your child's own ideas stay in charge.

Inside the complete guide

The complete guide turns these ideas into a practical routine for real homework. You don't need to be a tech expert. You need a clear routine, a few calm sentences, and some practice on real assignments.

Your 14 days at a glance

DAYS 1-3 Notice Review one homework moment and have one short conversation.	DAYS 4-5 Agree Fill in the Family AI Agreement together.	DAYS 6-13 Practice Use the routine on three real assignments.	DAY 14 Check in Ten minutes together. Choose one adjustment.
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Eight printable tools

PARENT Your 14-Day Plan A day-by-day roadmap from your first observation to a short family check-in.	PARENT Homework Moment Review A short reflection sheet for looking closely at one real assignment.
TOGETHER Family AI Agreement A one-page agreement you fill in together about help, privacy and expectations.	TOGETHER Think First Homework Flow Card A card to keep beside your child during homework, so you can point to the next step instead of repeating an explanation.
PARENT Three-Assignment Tracker A simple record of three real assignments to prepare your family check-in.	CHILD Step-by-Step Guide A child-friendly guide for working through a problem in a clear order.
CHILD AI Guidelines Simple guidelines that help your child use AI as a coach, not as an answering machine.	CHILD Example Prompts Ready-made questions that ask AI for help, not for answers.

IN EVERY CHAPTER

- Key idea
- Say this
- Try this
- What research says
- Watch out
- In short

Who is this guide for?

Parents & Caregivers

For adults supporting middle schoolers with homework, learning, technology and growing independence.

Teachers

Especially educators working with learners in the middle-school age range who are navigating independent learning alongside increasingly available AI tools.

Homeschooling Families

For parents and caregivers who guide much of their child's learning and want practical ways to develop independent thinking and responsible technology habits.

Especially useful for adults supporting learners roughly ages 11-14.

Get the complete guide

Every edition is a digital download, and all editions are currently available in English.

Think First Printable Toolkit

The practical toolkit only, as a printable PDF.

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This product includes the practical toolkit only. It does not include the full 44-page guide.

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- ◆ Homework Moment Review
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- ◆ Think First Homework Flow Card
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- ◆ Step-by-Step Guide
- ◆ AI Guidelines
- ◆ Example Prompts

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Would you like this guide in another language, or do you have an idea for a future resource? I'd love to hear from you.

Empower your child in the age of AI

A practical guide for parents of middle schoolers to help them learn, think critically and use AI wisely, at home and at school.

Give your child the tools to learn, think and grow.



Safe

Protect their privacy and make smart choices.

Critical

Think and verify information.

Creative

Explore and create with purpose.

Inside this book

- ✓ A practical 14-day plan to get started
- ✓ Clear family-friendly strategies and examples
- ✓ Tips to prevent common risks
- ✓ A ready-to-use Family AI Agreement, a Homework Flow Card + 6 more practical tools
- ✓ Activities to build critical thinking skills

and more...



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Colophon

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