

THE  
MANUAL TO

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MIDDLE  
SCHOOL

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*The*  
"DO THIS, NOT THAT"  
Survival Guide for Guys

JONATHAN CATHERMAN

*with*  
*Reed Catherman*  
*Cole Catherman*

  
Revell

a division of Baker Publishing Group  
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Jonathan Catherman with Reed Catherman and Cole Catherman, *The Manual to Middle School*  
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Published by Revell  
a division of Baker Publishing Group  
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287  
www.revellbooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is on file at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

ISBN 978-0-8007-2847-2

The author is represented by the literary agency of Books & Such.

17 18 19 20 21 22 23      7 6 5 4 3 2 1



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# INTRODUCTION

## Middle School Madness

**C**ongratulations, you've made it to middle school! Gone are the elementary days of line leaders, bathroom buddies, and running from girls infected with a sure fatal case of the cooties. Ahead of you are the middle school ways of changing classes, herd-like hallways, lockers, homework, studying, clubs, sports, dances, parties, and yes . . . girls.

Maybe you're one of those guys who thinks he is totally prepared for middle school. Umm, you're not. Could be you're questioning if you even have a snowball's chance in August of surviving. Yeah, you will. No matter how you see yourself right now, it's best to learn this fact. From the dawn of time guys have made it through similar coming-of-age stages in life. This just happens to be your first really big one.

Back in ancient history, guys about your age might have set out into the wilderness on a solo walkabout to prove themselves. Consider this: The original *Survival Man* series was exactly that. Can a young man-in-the-making survive in the wild, kill a beast with sharp teeth, fashion clothes from the hide, carve weapons from the bones, receive some spirit name, and then return home to take a wife? As cool as this may sound, let's face the facts. Most middle school guys today wouldn't last an hour under those conditions. Worse than the danger of death by wild animal, there was no Wi-Fi way back then. The middle school jungle you are about to enter is totally wired and ruled by class schedules, bells, tests, homework, hormones, cliques, jocks, geeks, and a few bullies. As wild as this may sound, survival is pretty much guaranteed. Want proof? It's called high school.

Your family may be saying stuff like “You’re growing up so fast” or “Why can’t you stay my little boy just a little longer?” They know that’s impossible and you don’t really want to keep the baby face you had back in elementary school. Nope, you are moving up to middle school, and to be totally truthful, it’s not going to be all fun and games. At the same time, you don’t want to resist the advancement. If you try to avoid the changes and challenges ahead, you’ll hear family and teachers start to say stuff like “It’s time to grow up and start taking responsibility for yourself!”

Ready or not, it’s best to move into middle school with some good advice from a few good guys. That is what this book is all about. Good advice from good guys who know what they are talking about. How much do they know, you ask? Well, the three guys who wrote this book all made it through middle school alive. All our major organs are still tucked neatly inside our bodies and we graduated up to high school a bit smarter, thanks to our teachers and parents. We wrote this book as a father-son team of middle school survival experts. Reed and Cole have the most recent experience, while Jonathan can say the 8th grade was the best two years of his life. Seriously. You will read more about that fun fact later in the book. To his benefit, Jonathan eventually made it out of middle school and went on to become a bestselling author and a professional sociologist with an expertise in teens, student leadership, and character development.

For now, please accept this book as our gift to you in your middle school years. We believe in you. We hope what you read next will help you be and do your very best in middle school and beyond. Good luck.



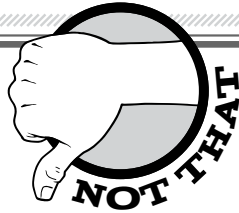
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# MIDDLE SCHOOL

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# 1st DAY

**B**efore you arrive for the first day of middle school, it's best to know a little about what you're stepping into. Here's what you need to know about the first day. At least one-third of the students are new to the building, and they are feeling about the same as you. The older kids are excited to see their friends, so they won't pay much attention to the newbies walking around. The building is bigger, halls are louder, and passing between classes can be like moving through a crazed herd of cats. The truth is, you might get lost once or twice on the first day of school. But don't worry about it because you won't be the only one. A right turn down the wrong hall can send anybody into the land of the lost. If you do find yourself wandering around, don't freak out. Your best plan for getting back on track and heading the right direction is only three steps away.

**STEP 1**—Ask for directions. The worst thing you can do is keep standing there looking lost.

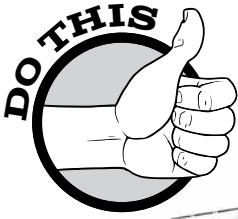
**STEP 2**—Get moving. The classroom isn't coming to you, so don't just stand there.

**STEP 3**—Don't make excuses. When you do finally make it to class, just tell the teacher that you got lost. They'll totally understand when you're honest about an honest mistake.

## Pop Quiz

**Q:** Where is the school gym?

**A:** You have no idea, so tape a school map on the inside cover of a master folder. When you get lost, just open the folder, read the map, and find your way to gym class.



# ABSENCES

**A**ccording to experts in every middle school attendance office world-wide, there are three legit reasons to be absent from school:

**Reason #1, Sick**—An infection, affliction, or disorder that can be examined, diagnosed, and verified. Symptoms include a high temperature, migraine, chunks hurling out of either end of your digestive system, broken bones, or another verifiable injury. NOT sick is when you are faking it.

**Reason #2, Family emergency**—Situations calling for immediate action, like the passing of a family member, your home is damaged by a freak weather storm, or the zombie apocalypse. NOT a family emergency is the death of your goldfish, girlfriend breaks up with you, or your favorite jeans didn't get washed due to a false call on that zombie apocalypse thing.

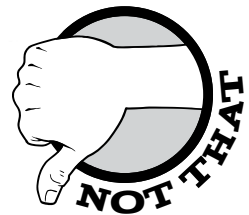
**Reason #3, Professional intervention**—When serious life or legal needs require outside professional or legal help. These may include, but are not limited to, counseling, court, or a doctor appointment. NOT an intervention includes “doing time” on the beach or a 10-hour therapy session with “Dr. Pillow.”

When you are absent for a day or two, bring a parent's or doctor's note to the office with an explanation of your absence.

## Quote

“Don't pretend to be sick and stay home to get out of a test or project. Fake absences still mean making up class and homework when you come back. There goes all your free time for a couple days.”





# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**E**ach morning a mystic voice from the great beyond will guide you into the school day. Actually, the voice will come from a squawking overhead speaker or live screen broadcast from a “studio” somewhere in the media center or main office. Either way, the info shared over the school announcements is worth paying attention to if knowing today’s lunch menu, the bell schedule, the next hat day, or the grade level winning the school-wide penny drive fundraiser is important to you. Such information is power, so sit down, listen up, and collect all the news you need to rule the day.

## **True Story**

Did you know popular radio personality, television host, and media producer Ryan Seacrest started his broadcasting career doing his school’s announcements? “I wore braces and glasses and was fat and got teased about it. But I was always very ambitious.”<sup>1</sup> After gaining experience over the morning announcements airwaves, he landed an internship at WSTR Radio in Atlanta, Georgia. Then he was off to study journalism at the University of Georgia before moving to California. The rest is Hollywood magic, and a lot of hard work.

