

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

George Read Middle School

Guiding Students for School Success

Choose from a variety of discipline techniques

When disciplining children, it's good to have many options. After all, children behave in a variety of ways! In fact, you can even use several methods at once. Here are some helpful approaches:



- **Stay calm.** Think before you act. Take time to listen to your child about why the homework didn't get turned in or the chores didn't get done.
- **Be loving.** This doesn't mean you have to be lenient. Respectful firmness is important, but don't be intimidating.
- **Give compliments.** Think of your relationship as a bank account. Your "deposits" (compliments) should far exceed your "withdrawals" (criticisms). If your child does a great job turning in assignments, notice it!
- **Take charge.** Stand up for your values through actions and words. Don't struggle over minor issues.
- **Don't give in.** When you've made a good rule or decision, stick to it! This sends your child a clear, reliable message.
- **Imagine.** Ask yourself, "How will my child and I look back on this?" Make discipline choices you'll be proud of later.
- **Forgive.** No one is perfect. Mistakes are opportunities to learn. Don't be too hard on yourself or your child.
- **Have patience.** Progress rarely happens right away. Give discipline time. Be proud that you're both trying!

Source: Rose Allen, "Parenting Tools: Tips for Using Discipline," University of Minnesota Extension Service, www.extension.umn.edu/family/W00014.html.

Beware the too-large penalty!



Yes, your child really messed up this time. But think twice before handing down an overly large punishment. If you give her a consequence that goes on and on—such as a month-long grounding—she may not be motivated to start behaving better. Why? Because if all of her privileges are already gone, what does she have to lose by pushing your buttons even more?

Source: Jennifer Shroff Pendley, Ph.D., "Disciplining Your Child," KidsHealth, <http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/family/discipline.html>.

Give your middle schooler respect and you'll get respect in exchange. For example:



- **Don't yell** or use an attacking tone.
- **Don't correct** your child in front of friends.
- **Listen with interest** when your child talks.
- **Display common courtesies** by saying "please" and "thank you."

No pushing!

The National Council of Youth Sports reports that roughly 41 million kids play in organized athletics.



It's good news because sports are great for teaching kids to get along with others and to control their emotions.

It's bad news, though, when parents push their little jocks too hard. If that happens, kids may grow frustrated and quit. Worse, they can lose the behavior-related benefits that come from being part of a team.

Source: David E. Williams, "Character builder or pressure-cooker: parents and youth sports," CNN.com, www.cnn.com/2006/HEALTH/parenting/07/03/kids.sports.parents/index.html.

Consistency is crucial

Are you a single parent? Do you share custody of your child with his other parent? Does your child receive guidance from you part of the day and from his grandparent or another caregiver the rest of the day?



No matter what your situation is, the more consistency you can give your child, the better. This means that he should be able to expect the same discipline style, rules for homework and consequences at all times.

Source: Kristen Zolten, M.A. and Nicholas Long, Ph.D., "Divorced Parenting," Center for Effective Parenting, www.parenting-ed.org/handout3/General%20Parenting%20Information/divorced%20parenting.htm.

Rules apply—wherever you are

You're at a friend's home and your child misbehaves. You don't want to embarrass him, but you also want to hold him responsible. What should you do? Keep your rules and consequences consistent—no matter where you are! To handle his attention-seeking behavior:



- **Set clear expectations ahead of time.** Does your child know the rules? Provide reminders if necessary.
- **Use consequences.** For example, if your child refuses to take turns with a toy, you might take the toy away.
- **Leave if necessary.** Tell the family ahead of time how you will handle it.
- **React positively to good behavior.** This encourages more successful outings!

Source: Barbara Potts, "Punishing in Public," FamilyEducation, <http://school.familyeducation.com/behavioral-problems/adoption/42538.html?detoured=1>.

Questions & Answers

Q: Parenting my high-strung child has always been tough, and it's just getting worse. How can I discipline her effectively when I'm so stressed out all the time?

A: It's hard to parent an intense child. Although these kids aren't get mad—they get furious. They aren't "a little annoyed"—they're in full tantrum mode. And as the parent, you aren't just tired out from it—you're downright exhausted. Although there's no easy, foolproof way to discipline a high-strung child, there are ways to make the task more manageable:

- **Don't go it alone.** Form a united front with your partner. House rules should be enforced by both parents. Never let your child play one against the other.
- **Celebrate the positive.** Find something to praise your child for every day, even if you have to search hard. Show her—through your words and actions—that she's loved. When it comes to discipline tools, praise is as powerful as punishment.
- **Don't yell.** Avoid getting into shouting matches with your child. They're pointless.
- **Keep your cool.** Never discipline your child when you're enraged. Instead, walk away until you're calm.
- **Take breaks.** All parents need time off, but this is especially true for parents of intense kids. Although it may be hard, it's critical to give yourself regular breathers. These short breaks can go a long way toward helping you be a better, more effective parent.



Source: Sarah Chana Radcliffe, M.Ed., "Parenting Challenging Children," Parenting-Advice.net, www.parenting-advice.net/challenging_children.html.

Don't leave good behavior at the door

Does your little angel sprout horns the minute she gets home? Try not to let it bother you. The fact that your child knows how to act when she's at school and elsewhere shows that she understands what good behavior looks like.

Letting down her guard at home is normal—and frustrating—so don't think of it as a sign of disrespect. Of course, don't let her get away with it, either!

Source: "Behavior of Children Ages 5-8," Parenting-QA.com, www.parenting-qa.com/index/Parenting/Ages%3A+5-8/Behavior.

Be firm—set limits on video game time

Once your child starts playing a fun video game, it can be hard for him to stop. Truth be told, many parents have trouble saying "no" when kids are having so much fun.



Set a limit on video game time and remind your child that school work always comes first. Stay firm, just the way you are about other rules. Your child needs (and wants) to know that you're in charge.

Source: Marguerite Kelly, "Keep Things Real While Allowing Video Games," October 20, 2006, *The Washington Post* (The Washington Post Company, 1-800-627-1150, washingtonpost.com).

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