

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

George Read Middle School

Guiding Students for School Success

What makes a 'good' rule?

The advice is good: Set essential rules and limits, and stick to them. Then kids don't get confused by too many rules—some of which never get enforced. But which rules are most important? To find out, ask yourself:

- **Will this rule keep my child safe?** Kids need to know the basics about safety—such as how to cross the street and avoid serious dangers.
- **Does this rule explain right and wrong?** Examples of good rules include “Honesty is the best policy” and “Pay for what you take.”
- **Can this rule improve relationships?** For example, kids should learn how to get along with others by being patient, polite and kind.
- **Does this rule teach responsibility?** Children need to build self-discipline. They might study at a certain time each day, for instance, or clean up their toys at night.

If your rules fit these guidelines, great! If not, ask yourself another question. “Is this rule worth arguing about?” Kids need freedom to be themselves—to make some choices (and even some mistakes). If your limits provide a strong foundation, your child is likely to handle a variety of situations well—at home and in the classroom.

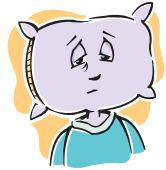
Source: Bonnie Maslin, “How to Pick Your Battles,” Parenting.com, www.parenting.com/parenting/article/0,19840,670952_1,00.html.



Sleep affects behavior

Parents sometimes lay blame on themselves or their children for discipline problems.

Yet another cause is quite common—lack of high-quality sleep. To encourage refreshing sleep:



- **Help your child relax** before bed. If the day has been tense, put forth extra effort.
- **Do soothing activities** at bedtime. No TV—just quiet tuck-ins, reading and conversation.
- **Set your child's body clock.** Create sensible routines, such as turning down lights at the same time each evening.
- **Learn how much sleep** your child needs. Kids are unique, but school-age children generally need about 10 hours total.

Source: Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, “Understanding the Connection Between Sleep & Behavior,” Parenthood.com, http://parenthood.com/articles.html?article_id=9506.

Squeeze more time out of the clock!

Don't let your “before-school rush hour” become too stress-filled. To get everyone out the door on time, try “fudging” the time. Set your clocks ahead 10 minutes. Maybe it's all in your mind, but having that 10-minute cushion might be all you need to get the gang up and out without any stomping or fussing!



Source: Elaine Collins, “Backpack Buddies: Dealing with Morning Madness,” The Ohio State University Extension, http://ohioline.osu.edu/bb-fact/pdf/bb_f_1.pdf.

Focus on manners at home and you'll be helping your child's teacher, too. Start small. Choose two or three things to work on. You might start with taking turns and not interrupting. Be positive. If your child waits until you're off the phone before talking, praise her.

Once your daughter masters these basics, you can move on to other skills.



Point out the up side of getting older

Does your older child throw fits because he has more chores or homework than his younger sister? Remind him of the perks that come with age. “I know you don't like doing big jobs. But remember, you get to stay up an hour later than your sister.” This “responsibility reality check” will remind your older child of how “grown up” he is!

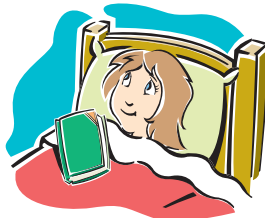


Source: Armin Brott, “Getting Kids to Do Chores,” Keep Kids Healthy, LLC, www.keepkidshealthy.com/parenting_tips/dads/chores.html.

Maintain routines for smoother holidays

With visitors, parties, gifts and special meals, your child can get overwhelmed and over-tired this holiday season! Remember to stick to regular routines and healthy mealtimes as much as possible. Remember to:

- **Maintain a regular bedtime.** Staying up late for a family gift exchange is fine; staying up late every night of winter break isn't.
- **Monitor food and drinks.** Instead of caffeinated soda at holiday parties, offer water or juice. Try to limit sweets, too. Remember, too little sleep or too much sugar won't make the holidays merrier!
- **Include time for quiet reading.** Add writing activities to your holiday fun.



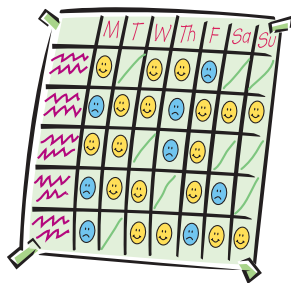
Source: Mary A. Carskadon, "The Sleep of America's Children," National Sleep Foundation, www.sleepfoundation.org/hottopics/index.php?secid=11&cid=82.

Questions & Answers

Q: I'd like to use a reward chart to keep track of my child's behavior. What's the best way to make one?

A: Keep it simple! Your goal is to make a colorful, kid-friendly chart that your child can use to see what a good job he's doing. Here's how:

- **Get your child's input.** Ask him what should be listed on the chart. For instance, he might want to include behaviors like "Makes bed in the morning" or "Hangs backpack in hall closet at night." Rewards could include a special snack or a trip to the park.
- **Show progression.** It's important for your child to see his progress, so design a chart that shows him moving toward a goal. He can do this by adding a sticker after each good behavior he demonstrates, or by connecting the dots from one good behavior to another.
- **Include bad behaviors.** If your child earns a "happy face" for each time he finishes his homework without whining, he should earn a "sad face" for every homework-related tantrum. At the end of the week, if the happy faces outnumber the sad ones, he can have a reward.
- **Keep the time period short.** Chart behaviors a week at a time. Much longer, and your child may lose interest.
- **Make it a family affair.** Post your child's chart in a common area—the kitchen or living room, for example. Let him add his own stickers or connect the dots himself. It will remind him that his behavior—good and bad—affects everyone.



Source: "10 Techniques To Shape Children's Behavior," AskDrSears.com, www.askdrsears.com/html/6/T061300.asp.

Happy times are part of discipline

You've probably heard of "time out." But what about "time in"? Schedule positive times with your child—times when you do what she loves and compliment her strengths. This reminds her of how great it feels to get along. If her behavior isn't perfect, be patient. Focus on encouragement and fun.

Source: "Disciplining your School Age Child," Keep Kids Healthy, www.keepkidshealthy.com/schoolage/schoolagediscipline.html.

Get your message back on track

When it comes to disciplining your child, have you been inconsistent or lax lately? To get back on track, explain to him what's happening: "I've been sending you mixed messages about what's okay and what's not. That needs to change. These are the rules for our house and for getting school work done. We're all going to follow them."

By using this approach, you'll be taking responsibility for your part in having let things slide—not just blaming him.

Source: Jill Hamburg Coplan, "Stop Yelling!" Parents.com, www.parents.com/parents/story.jhtml?storyid=templatedata/parents/story/data/5618.xml.



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