

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

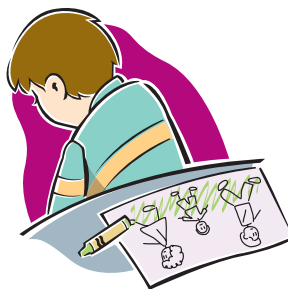
George Read Middle School

Guiding Students for School Success

## Divorce can affect discipline issues

When parents divorce, children may feel angry, afraid and guilty. Their behavior and school performance often reflect this. Meanwhile, parents are emotionally exhausted, too. To reconnect with your child:

- **Say how much you love him.** Make it clear that, yes, your marriage is changing. But keep other parts of your child's life as stable as possible. Let many routines stay the same. If possible, try not to switch schools right away. Help him feel secure and cared about.
- **Give age-appropriate explanations.** Kids often blame themselves for divorce. Tell your child that your divorce is not his fault and that parents divorce *each other*—but never their kids. Speak politely about the other parent. In a calm, reassuring way, discuss how your child's life will—and will not—change.
- **Ease into new living arrangements.** Living with a single parent may require new chores for your child. Introduce them slowly. Allow your child to adjust. Try to run an organized, upbeat home. Remember to add some fun along with jobs.
- **Prepare for discipline differences.** Sometimes parents have opposite discipline styles. When your child is with you, stick to your values and rules. Even if things are different elsewhere, your child will learn what you expect. He will also be glad that you care enough to set meaningful limits.



Source: "Discipline Following Divorce: 4 Techniques," AskDrSears.com, [www.askdrsears.com/html/10/T110240.asp](http://www.askdrsears.com/html/10/T110240.asp).

## Why 'okay' isn't okay!

When it's time to give your child a command, it's not okay to say "okay." Why?

Because "okay" implies that obeying is optional.



Instead, be clear and direct when telling her to do something. Here's how it looks:

- **INCORRECT:** "Put your books away, okay?"
- **CORRECT:** "Your books are scattered all over the table. Put them away now, please."

Source: Kimberly L. Keith, "Quick Discipline Strategies," About.com, <http://childparenting.about.com/cs/discipline/a/quickdiscipline.htm>.

You get a phone call from your child's



teacher saying that he has not been turning in his homework. What should you do? Start nagging? Again?

Remember that homework contract everyone signed at the start of the school year? Now is the time to sit down with your child and review it. Remind him of the important commitment he made.

## Point out your child's progress

Your child used to throw fits when you told her to turn off the TV and start her homework.



But when you tell her the same thing now, she obeys without complaint.

What should you do? Praise her! "I'm so proud of how well you listen to me! You used to fuss about starting your homework, but now you're much more responsible about getting it done."

Source: Rajeswari Natrajan and Judith A. Myers-Walls, Ph.D., "Positive Reinforcements and Rewards," Purdue University Extension, [www.ces.purdue.edu/providerparent/PDF%20Links/PositiveReinfRewards.pdf](http://www.ces.purdue.edu/providerparent/PDF%20Links/PositiveReinfRewards.pdf).

## Let your child face the music

Your fifth grader kept putting off his homework all



evening. Now it's bedtime and his math assignment isn't done. Should you let him stay up late to finish? Should you help him?

No and no. Resist the urge to "rescue" your child. Instead, let him face the consequences of not doing his work. He'll have an uncomfortable day at school tomorrow, but it may teach him not to ignore his homework again.

Source: Steven Dowshen, MD, and Jennifer Shroff Pendley, Ph.D., "Disciplining Your Child," KidsHealth.org, [www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/discipline.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/discipline.html).

## Organization is key to relaxed mornings

Mornings can be a discipline minefield. There are things to do and places to be—but everyone is tired.



To avoid the morning hassle:

- **Prepare the night before.** Choose outfits. Pack backpacks. Make lunches. Check the calendar for special events. Go to bed on time!
- **Use alarm clocks.** Encourage independence (and prevent arguments) by having your child wake up to an alarm instead of your voice.
- **Make a chart.** Help your child organize and understand his jobs. For example, he has to brush his teeth, brush his hair and get dressed.
- **End on a happy note.** On the way to the bus stop, for example, plan something fun to do that afternoon.

Source: Annie Scheiner, "Mornings Without Mayhem: A Smart Start to the School Day," *Washington Parent*, September 2006 (Knollwood Publications, Inc., 301/320-2321, [www.washingtonparent.com](http://www.washingtonparent.com)).

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** I tell my child over and over again not to do something, but she does it anyway. It drives me crazy! How can I get her to listen to me without losing my mind?

**A:** Start by stopping your habit of telling her things "over and over." Your child should be expected to listen to you. She shouldn't get unlimited chances to do so. One way to teach her this concept is by using "The Three Times Rule."

Here's how it works:

1. **Explain to your child how things are going to be.** "From now on, you'll have two chances to obey when I tell you to do something. If I have to tell you a third time, you will suffer the consequences. No excuses."
2. **Remind your child that she has the power to control the situation.** She'll always get two warnings about her behavior. If she ignores those warnings, she will suffer the consequence.
3. **Use the system.** First, give your child a command. "Emily, please put your schoolbooks away." If she ignores you, mention a consequence. "Emily, put your schoolbooks away or you'll go to time-out." If she still ignores you, give the command again and then enforce the consequence. (It's vital that you follow through!)
4. **Be consistent.** For this system to work, you must use it every time your child misbehaves. This lets her know what to expect and continually gives her the chance to modify her own behavior (and avoid punishment).



Source: "The Three Times Rule," [FamilyEducation.com](http://life.familyeducation.com/marriage/parenting/45608.html), <http://life.familyeducation.com/marriage/parenting/45608.html>.

## Focus on using positive discipline

Many parents find themselves disciplining in negative ways, such as yelling too often. To focus on the positive:

- **Tell** your child what he *can* do.
- **Give** your child choices. Then accept what he decides.
- **Try** changing an environment instead of a behavior.
- **Make** rules that are easy to understand and follow.
- **Ignore** annoying, yet harmless, behavior.
- **Praise** good behavior!

Source: Dawn Marie Barhyte, "Ain't misbehaving: The do's and don'ts of positive discipline," Partnership for Learning, [www.partnershipforlearning.org/article.asp?ArticleID=2409](http://www.partnershipforlearning.org/article.asp?ArticleID=2409).

## Hitting hurts in more ways than one

Corporal punishment won't just affect your child now—it may affect her later.



According to research, the more children are hit as punishment:

- **The more likely** they are to use corporal punishment on their own kids.
- **The angrier** they are as adults.
- **The more likely** they are to hit their spouses.

To keep these sobering statistics out of your child's future, stop hitting her. Now.

Source: "Guidance for Effective Discipline," American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://aapublications.org/cgi/reprint/pediatrics;101/4/723.pdf>.

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*Guiding Students for School Success*

Publisher: John H. Wherry, Ed.D.

Managing Editor: Pat Hodgdon.

Editor: Erika Beasley.

Writers: Susan O'Brien, Holly Smith.

Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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**1-800-756-5525**

[www.parent-institute.com](http://www.parent-institute.com) • ISSN 1545-7737