

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Guiding Students for School Success

Dr. Paul Walmsley

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Find ways to encourage honesty

Grade schoolers should be expected to tell the truth. But that doesn't mean they'll always do it. Often, kids are afraid of angering or disappointing adults. To encourage honesty:

- **Show sympathy.** Never call your child a "liar." Instead, encourage truthfulness. "I know it's hard to tell the truth sometimes. I'm proud when you're honest."
- **Ask yourself,** "Why is he lying?" If your child is struggling with homework, for example, he may be tempted to lie about doing it. Work on solving fundamental problems.
- **Stay in the present.** If your child lies, don't bring up past fibs. When he admits a lie, appreciate his confession and let him move on.
- **Relax.** Remember that no one is perfect. Your child will learn the most from mistakes if you're thoughtful and composed.
- **Reward honesty.** Let him know how much you appreciate the truth. "It wasn't easy for you to tell me that, but you did. Good for you!"
- **Be a role model.** Avoid lying to—or in front of—your child. It sets a poor example and it could make him lose trust in you, too.



Source: Mary VanClay, "The honest child: How to teach honesty," ParentCenter.com, <http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/refcap/bigkid/raisinggreatkids/67924.html>.

Details make the difference!

Want your child to do as she's told? Then say something specific!

Saying, "Knock it off or you'll be sorry!" doesn't really mean anything. Instead, let her know exactly what will happen if she doesn't behave. "If you don't stop bouncing that ball inside, I'm going to take it away." The clearer and more direct you are, the better.



Source: "Discipline that Works," Education Minnesota, www.educationminnesota.org/index.cfm?PAGE_ID=1178.

One of the best ways to help your child handle stress is to handle it well yourself.

When faced with a difficult situation, stop and think about it. Then review your conclusion aloud. For example, "That store manager made me so mad! I felt like yelling at him. But I spoke politely, and that helped everything work out."



Harness the power of praise

Want to motivate your child to behave better? Praise her! Praising is considered a "social reward" because it helps strengthen your relationship with your child. And unlike monetary rewards, praising doesn't cost anything or foster greediness!



To praise your child's good behavior effectively:

- **Make eye contact** when you speak.
- **Smile and get close** to her.
- **Hug or touch her** lovingly.
- **Be specific.** "I'm so proud of how hard you worked on your book report!"

Source: Timothy Dunnigan, Ph.D., "Effective Praising," HELP for Families, www.helpforfamilies.com/help/parents/parent_base.htm.

Use fun ways to reward good behavior

Has your little angel been great about following the rules lately? Let him know how proud you are! Here are a few kid-friendly rewards you can offer. They're free, easy and perfect for your elementary schooler!

- **Staying up** later.
- **Sitting** next to the window in the car.
- **Pitching a "reading tent"** in the living room.
- **Choosing** a special meal.
- **Going** on a bike ride with Mom or Dad.
- **Getting** an extra bedtime story.



Source: "Reward Suggestions for Kids," Child Development Institute, www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/parenting/rewards.shtml.

Prepare your child for peer pressure

Many people associate peer pressure with teens. But long before middle or high school, kids feel pressure from others. To help your child react well:

- **Discuss challenging situations she might face.** Role-play ways to handle them. Remind her that being rude is okay if it removes her from an unsafe situation.
- **Tell her sometimes it's all right to "disappoint" a friend.** Your child should never go along with something she knows is wrong.
- **Support your child no matter what.** If she tells you about a mistake, show compassion and help her learn from the experience.



Source: Denise Witmer, "5 Strategies for Preteens Handling Peer Pressure," About.com, <http://parentingteens.about.com/cs/peerpressure/a/preteenspeer.htm>.

Questions & Answers

Q: We're hosting a big family gathering in November, but my child's table manners aren't great. How can I help him brush up on the basics so I don't have to correct him in front of our guests?

A: Keep things simple. You don't want to overwhelm your child by expecting him to memorize too many rules. Instead, focus on a few key points. Encourage your child to:

- **Use common sense.** Etiquette is about behaving properly so the people around you feel comfortable. So don't get too caught up in the "rules" of etiquette. Instead, when your child is at the table, have him ask himself, "Is my behavior making anyone uncomfortable?" If it is, he should stop doing what he's doing.
- **Stick with the basics.** Remind your child of the big no-no's of table manners. These include: no talking with your mouth full, no reaching across others to grab food and no eating with your hands (unless finger food is on the menu). Begin practicing these rules before your get-together.
- **Take things slowly.** Your child is more likely to lapse into bad manners if he's eating too quickly. So remind him to slow down. Consider enforcing an "everyone eats dessert at the same time" rule, too. This may keep him from racing through dinner in order to get to the good stuff.
- **Be polite.** Teach your child to be courteous—by regularly saying "please," "thank you" and "excuse me." Chances are no one will notice that his elbows are on the table!



Source: "12 Basic Table Manners for Kids," Advice with Dr. Dave and Dr. Dee, www.drdaveanddee.com/elbows.html.

Words can hurt

You may not spank your child, but your words can still sting. If you call him names or ridicule him when he misbehaves, you're hurting your child as much—or more—than if you'd struck him. So stop yourself before the next "You're such a brat!" leaves your lips. If you don't, your child may start living up (or down) to your words.

Source: Holly Bennett and Teresa Pitman, "The Discipline Challenge: What does it Mean?" Today'sParent.com, www.todaysparent.com/article.jsp?content=3570#hurt.

First schoolwork, then supper!

It's fine to let your child blow off steam for an hour after school. Just don't push homework time back too far.



Having her wait until after dinner to hit the books can create headaches for everyone. Since you'll both be tired, you're more likely to fight over getting her work done. Also, if she's already gotten all her playtime in, you can't use that as an incentive for her to buckle down.

Source: Heather Hatfield, "Top 10 Parenting Pitfalls: How to Raise Well Behaved Children," FoxNews.com, www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,197708,00.html.

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