

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Guiding Students for School Success

Dr. Paul Walmsley

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Teasing—is it a need for attention?

Sometimes children tease each other, even though they know they'll get in trouble for it. This confuses parents. Why would kids misbehave and be cruel to others—knowing the consequences? The answer may be related to power and attention.

Kids don't have much power, and teasing is an easy way to get it. Meanwhile, teasing also gets noticed. It encourages people (adults and peers alike) to react, and negative attention feels better than no attention at all.

To prevent teasing:

- **Spend one-on-one time with your child every day.** Even a few minutes together are worthwhile. Do things that interest him.
- **Schedule at least one hour a week of parent-child time.** Choose an activity your child loves. Plan it in advance, write it on your calendar and make it a top priority.
- **Praise your child often.** If he has siblings, compliment everyone and make sure giving one child a compliment doesn't hurt another's feelings.
- **Pay attention to behavior.** A little playful teasing is normal, but hurtful teasing is not okay. Help your child find positive alternatives.

Talk with your child's teacher about what you have observed. Discuss concerns and possible solutions. Working as a team will make a difference.

Source: Polly Greenberg, "The Problem With Teasing," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, February/March 2006 (Scholastic Inc., 1-800-724-6527, <http://scholastic.com>).



Help develop a sense of sportsmanship

It's important for children to become good sports, not just in athletics, but in life. Parents play a key role in helping this happen. To encourage good sportsmanship:

- **Emphasize** respect for others.
- **Behave** the way you want your child to act.
- **Reward** your child when she is respectful.
- **Reinforce** values such as integrity and humility.
- **Have your child treat** others with understanding.
- **Remind** your child to enjoy competitive activities—even if she doesn't win.

Discuss what your child learns from experiences.

Source: Craig Clifford and Randolph Feezell, "Ten Ways to Raise a Good Sport," *Athletes for a Better World*, www.abw.org/newsletters/tenways.asp.

School rules apply on the bus, too

Your youngster follows classroom rules, but how does she do on the school bus? Does she remember to stay still while the bus is moving? Does she know not to bounce from seat to seat? Review these rules with her. Breaking the "school bus rules" may cause her to lose riding privileges. Even worse—it's a safety hazard.



Source: Teresa Pitman, "School Bus Rules," *Today's Parent*, www.todayparent.com/behaviordevelopment/schoolage/article.jsp?content=20031010_111541_1868&page=1.

We have all heard the myth that children



who are "gifted" are more likely to have behavior problems. Yet experts say that's not true. It is important, though, not to expect "gifted" kids to be almost perfect, either. Instead, be supportive, not demanding.

Source: Marilyn Elias, "Critical, demanding parents can damage gifted children," *USA TODAY*, August 22, 2005 (Gannett Co. Inc., 1-800-872-0001, www.usatoday.com).

Use humor to keep your cool

Don't blow a gasket over something minor. Defuse the situation with humor! Instead of laying into your child (which may lead to shouting or tears), get silly. In your best cartoon character voice, tell him what he needs to do. "Yikes, are those your papers all over the couch? Better get 'em before I go nuts!" True, you can't use this approach all the time. But for the nitpicky stuff, why not?



Source: A. Gedrose, "Encouraging Cooperation," *Child & Family Canada*, www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/ycca/00000348.htm.

Recognize behavior disorders

Is your child just ornery? Or does he have a true behavior disorder? Ask yourself these questions:

- *Does my child often argue* with adults or lose his temper?
- *Is he frequently angry*, irritated or spiteful?
- *Does he regularly annoy* people or blame others for his mistakes?
- *Does he refuse to obey* authority?

If you answered “yes” to these questions, your child may have a behavior disorder. Talk to his pediatrician or school counselor about getting help.

Source: Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D. and Christine M. Benton, *Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behavior*, ISBN: 1-57230-321-2 (The Guilford Press, 1-800-365-7006, www.guilford.com).

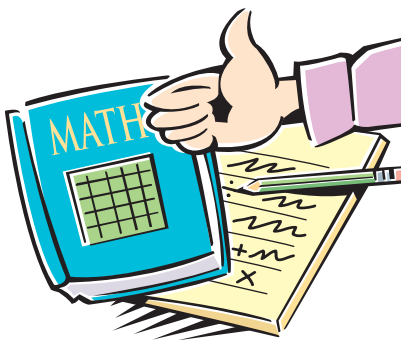


Questions & Answers

Q: I'm tired of always saying “no” to my child and telling her what *not* to do! How can I focus more on what she's doing right than on what she's doing wrong?

A: Congratulations on wanting to celebrate your child's good behavior! As you've discovered, saying “no” all the time can get tiring. It also doesn't do much to promote the behavior you'd like to see in your child.

- To start changing your focus from “no” to “yes,” remember to:
 - **Avoid knee-jerk answers.** Do you have a habit of saying “no” to your child's requests before she's even finished asking? Then break the habit. Take time to find out what she wants before deciding whether she can have it. If you don't hear her out, you'll never know if a request was reasonable.
 - **Notice what she does right.** Did your child finish her math homework without whining about it? Did she put her art supplies back where they belong? Tell her how proud you are! Give her attention for doing the right thing, and she may try to do it more often.
 - **Give options instead of refusals.** If your child asks for something reasonable, but you can't give it to her, avoid offering a flat-out “no.” Instead, see if you can give her an alternative. “I'm sorry, but we don't have time to go to the park right now. How about if I put dinner in the oven and then we play catch for a little while?”



Keep your child's uniqueness in mind

You didn't fuss about homework when you were a child. (Or so you claim.) So why does your child throw fits when you ask her to hit the books? Probably because *you and your child are different people.*

Given that, don't assume she'll feel the same way about school (or anything else) that you did. Accept that she's

unique and treat her accordingly. You may end up with fewer homework-related battles!



Source: Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D., *How to Help Your Child With Homework*, ISBN: 1-57542-168-2 (Free Spirit, 1-800-735-7323, www.freespirit.com).

Positive responses motivate children

Children get feedback at school for working hard (such as getting good grades). They need this at home, too. Simple things like saying, “Look how many spelling words you got right. I'm proud of you!” Remind your child that he's doing well—and that you're interested in his progress. Then he's more likely to succeed again.

Source: Lydia Soto, “Homework Q&A,” *Washington Parent*, January 2006 (Knollwood Publications, Inc., 301/320-2321, www.washingtonparent.com).

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