

To Teach Your Child Responsibility, Give It!

Parents dream of the day their child will finally be responsible enough to do things for herself, like getting up and ready for school or doing chores at home. Here's how you can teach your child responsibility in three basic steps:

(Warning: This can be tough for parents.)

1. Give your child some responsibility that is safe and appropriate for her age.
2. Let your child figure out how to do the job herself.
3. Require your child to live with the consequences of her actions, for better or worse.

The hard part? Don't bail her out if she doesn't do the job—or does it poorly. If she forgets materials



she should have taken to school, let her do without them. Really.

Simple mistakes have taught us all very important lessons—and we must allow our child to learn from them, too.

What Happens at Home Affects School Success

Family is the foundation of a child's life. Every child needs a healthy home environment to do well at school and elsewhere. One sign of a healthy home is structure—an organized, consistent way of life. Another sign is stability—which provides strength to get through tough times.

When children have structured, stable home lives, they also have:

- **Security.** They know what's expected of them and how to behave. They know that even when things don't go well, the family will survive.
- **Reliability.** Their families are strong and dependable, so they count on them for support (instead of turning to gangs, drugs or alcohol).
- **Responsibility.** They learn through experience that things work best when everyone pitches in.
- **Pride.** Their families' priorities are reflected in their habits and actions. They feel good about helping achieve important family goals.



Sometimes, Bad Behavior Just Needs to be Ignored

Does your child keep whining, crying or throwing temper tantrums—no matter what you do or say?

Children do that to get what they want. They know their parents will usually cave in. One of the most effective solutions is to ignore the behavior. Try this:

- **Withdraw all attention.** Don't talk to your child. Don't frown. Don't show disapproval. Ignore it.
- **Be consistent.** Don't ignore a behavior one time and attend to it the next—even if you're in public. If you react, your child will act out several more times.
- **Be prepared for the behavior to get worse.** When your child doesn't get the reaction he's used



to getting, he might intensify his efforts. Stay the course! Once he realizes his behavior isn't working, it will start to disappear. It usually takes one to five days of consistent, total ignoring for behavior to correct itself.

Expectations—A Secret To Behavior Control

Do you find that your children behave almost perfectly with some people, or in some situations, but not always for you? Well, you're not alone—and there are things you can do about it.

Try these simple tips:

- **Remember that children are masters** of figuring out what is expected of them in different settings and with different people. Explain your expectations to your child clearly, especially in a new situation. Have your child explain the expectations back to you.
- **Avoid repetition.** After making your expectations clear, avoid nagging when your child doesn't live up to them. Instead, try using no words at all. Just give your child a long, meaningful "look." She will



know exactly what you are “saying” and you will see her behavior change quickly.

Though it may be hard to believe, your child does want to please you—when she knows what you expect.

Consequences Can Be Your Best Discipline Tools

First make clear to your child what your rules are and how you expect him to behave. Make sure your child understands that, if he does not follow the rules or acts inappropriately, there will be consequences for his actions.

Actually, every action your child takes has a consequence. If he does what you expect, you will be pleased and you may praise him for it. If he does not, there will also be consequences.

Go over your house rules together and agree on appropriate consequences. That way, there will be no surprises. For example, if your child doesn't put his clothes in the laundry hamper, he gets no clean clothes that week. If he does not finish his dinner, he may get no dessert.



When you use firm, fair and consistent consequences with your child—and enforce them every time—you will see that discipline practically takes care of itself!

To Get Your Child's Respect, Give Your Child Respect

Teach your child to be respectful of rules, authority and other people by first being a model of respect for her. Here are some ways to do it:

- **Really and truly listen** when your child tells you something. Don't interrupt.
- **Be fair.** Listen to your child's side before coming to a conclusion.
- **Be courteous to your child.** Say, "Please," "Thank you" and "You're welcome." Never say, "Shut up."
- **Honor your child's privacy.** Give her some time to be alone.
- **Let your child make choices** (within your limits)—what to do, eat or wear, and when to do homework.



- **Respect your child's decisions** on all but the most critical topics. Avoid saying, "I told you so."
- **Talk openly and honestly** with your child.