

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Neil Cummins Elementary School

Guiding Students for School Success

Build respect at the dinner table

Being polite is a way to show respect. And dinnertime offers you a daily chance to reinforce this lesson. First, explain how being polite makes life more pleasant for everyone. Then:

- **Start with the basics.** Have everyone wash hands before dinner and do not allow toys at the table. Everyone should sit up straight, use polite words and—when excused—carry dishes to the sink.
- **Teach extra skills.** Kids are proud to learn “grown up” rules. For example, it’s polite to wait until everyone is served before starting to eat. Also teach the proper way to use utensils.
- **Practice communicating.** Dinnertime is about more than eating. It’s about talking, too. Set a great example by avoiding lectures and arguments. Try to ignore the phone and other interruptions.
- **Set guidelines.** Decide which rules are most important to your family, such as having everyone there for dinner. Choose rules that everyone can follow. (But don’t require your child to “clean his plate.” It’s best to stop when he’s full.)
- **Use consequences.** Require a *please* when asking for a dish to be passed. Impose a consequence for leaving the table without asking to be excused. In general, though, mealtime should be fun!



Source: “Teaching table manners to your school-age child,” ParentCenter.com, http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_teaching-table-manners-to-your-school-age-child_1429037.pc?articleId=1429037&showAll=true.

Uh oh. You see your child doing something wrong and you think he might deny it with a lie. You can prevent this by how you approach the situation.

Instead of saying, “Alex, did you eat an extra cookie?” you might say, “I see you ate a cookie without asking. Let’s talk about it.” Then, instead of having two problems (misbehavior and a lie), you only have one.



Turn misbehavior into a lesson on respect

Your child tries to provoke you by calling you a name. What do you do? Don’t take the bait!

Instead, respond calmly. “We don’t call people names in this family. If you want my attention, speak to me politely.”

Using this approach, you can demonstrate the kind of respect you’d like your child to show.

Source: Mary VanClay, “The respectful child: How to teach respect,” BabyCenter.com, http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_the-respectful-child-how-to-teach-respect_67920.pc.



Stop being a referee for sibling conflicts

Is your children’s constant bickering driving you nuts? To get a handle on sibling squabbles:



- **Refuse to take sides.** Don’t leap to one child’s defense when they’re both fighting.
- **Spend one-on-one time** with them. Just a few minutes of daily “alone time” with each child can ease tensions between siblings.
- **Teach them to resolve** their own conflicts. Offer some ways to make peace that don’t involve screaming and fighting.

Source: Kyla Boyse, R.N., “Sibling Rivalry,” University of Michigan Health System, www.med.umich.edu/1libr/yourchild/sibriv.htm.

Open the lines of communication

Of course you speak with your child, but how well do the two of you communicate? To make sure you’re communicating effectively:

- **Speak her language.** Use words your child understands.
- **Stay calm.** Even if you’re angry, try not to yell at her.
- **Watch your body language.** When it comes to communicating with your child, your non-verbal cues speak volumes.



Source: “Communicating with Children,” KidsBehaviour.co.uk, www.kidsbehaviour.co.uk/CommunicatingWithChildren.html.

Promote self-discipline at homework time

Children need help developing self-discipline when it comes to homework. You can make a difference when you:

- **Create a homework schedule.** Your child may procrastinate about studying, so it's best to stick to a daily routine.
- **Are upbeat about assignments.** Show that you believe homework is very important and interesting.
- **Help your child make a to-do list.** Talk about the order in which she'll do tasks. Tell her to try doing the hardest assignment first.
- **Stay nearby.** You can't study for your child, but you can offer guidance when she has questions. Also, encourage short breaks to help her refocus and reenergize.



Source: Lambeth Hochwald, "The right start," *Scholastic Parent & Child*, September 2008 (Scholastic Inc., 1-800-724-6527, www.scholastic.com).

Questions & Answers?

Q: When it comes to discipline, I'm great as far as being firm and fair. But I don't do so well with the consistent part. Any advice?

A: Yes—hang in there! Like everything else about parenting, good discipline is a process. It's not something you can master overnight. Still, you're right to be concerned about consistency, since it's a big part of effective discipline. To become more consistent, ask yourself if you are:

- **Realistic.** Is it possible to enforce all the rules you've set? For instance, if you insist that your child finish his schoolwork by five o'clock, but you don't get home until six, there's no way to consistently enforce that rule.
- **Committed.** Do you always take the idea of consistent discipline seriously, or do things tend to slip when you're tired or stressed? If your child knows he isn't allowed to eat in front of the TV, but also knows he can munch away if you're preoccupied, then it may be time to revisit the "no food in front of the tube" rule.
- **Flexible.** Are you willing to adjust your rules if they don't work in your daily life? If your child's bedtime is eight o'clock, but he's rarely in the sack by then because soccer practice, dinner and homework keep him up until nine, you may need to reevaluate. It's pointless to set a bedtime—or any other rule—that you know can't be enforced regularly.



Nurture your child's moral growth

Your role is vital when it comes to nurturing character and values.



In addition to being a good role model, promote your child's moral development by:

- **Joining her** in some meaningful activities. This could be anything from volunteering to camping.
- **Talking with her.** Explain why values matter.
- **Supporting her passions** and interests in things like sports, music or theater.

Source: Susan Gilbert, "Scientists Explore the Molding of Children's Morals," *The New York Times*, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9B0CE7D71731F93BA25750C0A9659C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>.

Learn the facts about spanking

Spanking isn't just painful—it may be harmful. According to research, corporal punishment:

- **May stop** a bad behavior momentarily, but doesn't teach a child how to behave better in the future.
- **May spark** feelings of revenge or hatred in a child.
- **May prompt** a child to continue the bad behavior, but to do it when the parent isn't around.
- **May encourage** a child to lie or sneak in order to avoid being hit.

Source: Lynne Namka, Ed.D., "What The Research Literature Says About Corporal Punishment," *AngriesOut.com*, www.angriesout.com/parents10.htm.

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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 • ISSN 1545-7737