

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

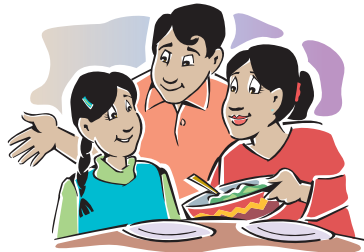
Neil Cummins Elementary School

Guiding Students for School Success

Make dinnertime an enjoyable experience for your family

Eating meals as a family is important. Unfortunately, it isn't always relaxing! Many parents find the stress associated with dinnertime overwhelming. They hear complaints about the food and arguments among siblings. And sometimes kids simply leave the table. So much for family togetherness! To make dinner manageable—and even meaningful—try to:

- **Be realistic.** If cooking isn't your passion, serve easy-to-prepare foods. Get your children involved. Invite them to help out. Or cook on the weekends and freeze meals for the week.
- **Time it right.** Plan dinnertime when you know everyone is hungry (not close to snack time). And if they've been exercising, children may need time to wind down before sitting still.
- **Accept reality.** What does your family enjoy at the table? Quiet talk? Lively debate? Fueling up for the next activity? Know what to expect.
- **Explain rules.** When your children are calm, discuss table manners. Ask for their ideas. Decide what's appropriate and state it simply.
- **Give reminders.** Help everyone adjust to table manners and routines. Say things like, "At dinner, we stay seated, talk without interrupting others and ask to be excused."



Source: Kay Kosak Abrams, Ph.D., "Dinner Without the Drama," *Washington Parent*, March 2008 (Knollwood Publications, Inc., 301-320-2321, www.washingtonparent.com).

It's fine to turn over a new discipline-related leaf this fall. But don't flip the whole tree at once! Start small. If you've been lax about chores or bedtime:

- **Begin** by assigning just one or two chores.
- **Pick** a reasonable hour for lights-out—and enforce it. Remember not to bombard your family with a dozen new rules at the same time.



Are you setting effective limits?

Positive discipline starts with setting limits. To be effective, your limits should be:

- Age-appropriate.
- Reasonable.
- Clear.
- Enforceable.

If they are, then you're right on target for setting—and also maintaining—effective limits!

Source: J. Eileen Welker, "Make Lemons into Lemonade: Use Positives for Disciplining Children," Ohio State University Extension, <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5153.html>.



What do you do when your child is bullied?

Being bullied is not a harmless part of childhood! Research shows that kids who are bullied are more likely than other kids to:

- **Skip school.**
- **Be depressed.**
- **Feel lonely or anxious.**

If your child is the victim of a bully, don't ignore the problem. Instead:

- **Listen to him.** Take your child's complaints seriously.
- **Never blame your child** for being bullied.
- **Contact the school.** Offer to solve the problem together.

Source: "What to Do if Your Child is Being Bullied," Stop Bullying Now! http://stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/HHS_PSA/pdfs/SBN_Tip_21.pdf.

Choose tasks your child can handle

To encourage your child to be responsible, trust her with jobs. But pick them carefully! She should feel good about her efforts. Here are some tasks a child might be able to handle:

- **Load the dishwasher.**
- **Sweep a small room.**
- **Pack school supplies** in her backpack.
- **Get ready** for an activity, such as dance or soccer.



Remember, your child is learning. Her work won't be perfect. Provide gentle—even humorous—support. And compliment her progress!

Source: Mary VanClay, "The responsible child: How to teach responsibility," *parentcenter.com*, http://parentcenter.babycenter.com/0_the-responsible-child-how-to-teach-responsibility_67945.pc.

Start the school year with successful habits

Research shows a link between parent involvement and student success. So, plan to pitch in with school activities—right at home. This will require some self-discipline, but will also set a great example for your child. Try to:



- **Put priorities on the calendar**, such as study time and school events.
- **Stay nearby while your child does homework.** He needs your support.
- **Create routines.** Read. Exercise. Go to the library. Have family meals.
- **Talk with your child about school.** Show your interest every day.
- **Keep in touch with the teacher.** Attend parent-teacher conferences.
- **Be consistent.** Use a daily and weekly schedule that works.

Source: Maya Cohen, "The Busy Parent's Guide to Raising Successful Students," FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/working-parents/parents-and-school/51326.html?page=1>.

Questions & Answers

Q: My fifth grader won't even put her dirty socks in the clothes hamper! How can I get her to be more responsible at school when she's always so irresponsible at home?

A: There's your answer: *at home*. Your child needs to learn responsibility at home so she can apply it at school. It's not the other way around. This isn't to say that teaching responsibility is easy. It's a process that takes time.

Here are some ways to get that process started:

- **Expect good things from her.** Let your child know that you believe she is capable. Rather than swoop in and solve every problem for her, give her the opportunity to figure some things out for herself. This goes for everything from math homework to jigsaw puzzles.
- **Give her chores.** Put your child in charge of certain tasks that are age-appropriate and insist that she complete them. Just make sure you're clear about what you expect. Rather than say, "Clean your room," be specific. "Put your books back on the shelf and hang up your jacket." Once you give her the instructions, leave the room. If you hover, it will seem like you don't think she can handle the job.
- **Let her experience consequences.** So your child still won't put her dirty socks in the hamper? Don't wash them on laundry day. The same goes for her soccer jersey and her sweats. When she realizes her favorite outfits aren't ready and waiting, she may get the message about where dirty laundry is supposed to go.



Is your child active—or overscheduled?

If your child's calendar is starting to overflow with activities, it's time to slow things down. Too-busy kids may become exhausted or emotionally drained.



To tell if your child is overscheduled, ask yourself whether he:

- **Seems anxious** or depressed.
- **Complains frequently** about stomachaches or headaches.
- **Is falling behind** in school.

Does this sound like your child?

Then take a hard look at his list of activities. It might be time to make some changes.

Source: Mary L. Gavin, MD, "Is Your Child Too Busy?" KidsHealth, www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/child_too_busy.html.

Smooth out mornings

Is your child a dawdler? Here are some tips to get her moving:

- **Rely on routines.** The more predictable you make her day, the less likely she'll be to drag her feet.
- **Don't rush her.** Build extra time into your schedule so you're not always yelling, "Hurry up!"
- **Limit choices.** Give her two school outfits to choose from, not four. Ask, "Waffles or cereal?" in the morning—not "What do you want for breakfast?"

Source: Nancy Samalin, "Dealing with Dawdling," Samalin.com, www.samalin.com/tips/tips_indiv/dealing_dawdling.html.

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