

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

St. Gabriel the Archangel School
Paulette Stinnett, Counselor

Guiding Students for School Success

Consistency: key to effective discipline

Your child begs you to bend the rules. Can she please, please, *please* stay up late to watch a TV show? It's been a long day, and you're tempted to give in. But sticking to her usual bedtime will work better in the long run. Why? Because she'll always know what to expect. ("If I beg to stay up late, Mom will say *no*. It's not worth asking.") When it comes to consistency, experts recommend that parents:



- **Set priorities.** Pick a few rules to enforce every time. If you have too many rules, you and your child will be overwhelmed.
- **Be patient.** You may not see improvement immediately. It takes time for kids to learn that *no* actually means *no*. Be prepared for some bumps in the road.
- **Use reminders.** Find a private place to post the rules you plan to follow, such as: "Ignore begging," "Reward cooperation" and "Enforce rules calmly, kindly and consistently."
- **Get support.** Join forces with other caregivers in your child's life, such as grandparents and babysitters, so that everyone uses the same rules.
- **Adjust carefully.** There will be times when rules don't apply, such as when you have to attend a special event. Discuss this in advance. "Your cousin's wedding is Saturday night, so you'll get to stay up late."

Source: Sarah Henry, "Seven tricks to staying consistent on discipline," BabyCenter, www.babycenter.com/0_seven-tricks-to-staying-consistent-on-discipline_3657214.bc.

Pack a powerful lunch

Send your child to school with a healthful lunch, and she may have an easier time staying focused and enthusiastic in class! To pack a lunch with the biggest nutritional punch, be sure it includes:

- **Fresh fruit or veggies.** Go for a variety of colors and textures.
- **Whole-grain bread,** bagels or crackers.
- **Lean proteins,** such as turkey or tuna.
- **Low-fat milk** or water instead of juice or sports drinks.



Source: Vincent Iannelli, M.D., "Healthy Lunches for Kids," About.com, http://pediatrics.about.com/od/nutrition/a/1008_schl_lunch.htm.

Self-discipline reduces family stress

You are the parent—and you are in charge. But your child can also help. Teaching self-discipline is the key. To help him manage daily tasks:

- **Discuss what needs to get done.** Listen to your child's opinions. Then be specific: In the morning, brush teeth, get dressed, put on glasses, eat breakfast by 7:15.
- **Use a visual reminder,** such as a chart. Give verbal reminders, too. "What's the first item on your chart? Check it off when you finish. Super! What's next?"
- **Be patient and encouraging** as your child learns routines. Over time, he'll need less supervision.



Source: Peg Dawson, Ed.D. and Richard Guare, Ph.D., *Smart but Scattered*, ISBN: 978-1-59385-445-4 (Guilford Press, www.guilford.com).

Don't let your child's school-related behavior issues linger over the summer! If he's been struggling this year:



- **Get a clear picture.** Talk to your child's teacher.
- **Form a team.** Ask for help from your child's teacher and principal. If possible, include next year's teacher, too. Brainstorm ways to improve the situation.
- **Get busy.** Use the break to start putting those behavior ideas in place!

How do you react to report cards?

Discussing your child's report card doesn't have to be difficult. It's an opportunity to learn about your child and have a positive effect on her future learning. Here's an effective approach:

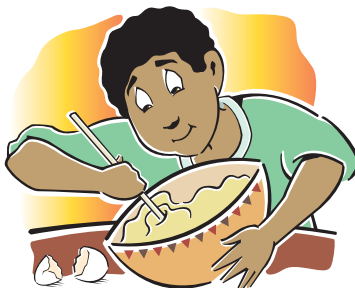


- **Start with expectations** that are reasonable.
- **Understand her perspective.** Ask, "How do you think you did?"
- **Stay positive.** Find things to compliment.
- **Help your child identify** problem areas and effective solutions.

Build responsibility in your child

Responsible kids learn to have a healthy respect for the house rules. This translates into being responsible and respectful at school, too. So teach your elementary schooler to be more responsible by asking him to:

- *Get himself up and ready* for school each morning.
- *Fix his own snacks.*
- *Pitch in* with household projects.
- *Lend a hand* with younger siblings.
- *Take care* of family pets.
- *Pack his school lunch* by himself.
- *Make his bed* and change his own sheets.
- *Help with cooking* and serving meals.



Source: Kathryn J. Kvoles, *Redirecting Children's Behavior*, ISBN: 1-884734-30-8 (Parenting Press, www.parentingpress.com).

Questions & Answers

Q: My child has never been seriously bullied, but he has been teased here and there. Is there any way to “bully proof” him now to avoid bigger problems later?

A: Absolutely! Although there’s no way to guarantee your child will never be picked on, you can certainly give him the skills he’ll need to deal with the situation if it ever arises.

- To teach your child how to handle a potential bully:
- *Describe the ideal situation.* Talk to your child about what you’d like to see happen if another youngster isn’t being nice. “Kyle, if Andrew calls you ‘metal mouth’ or makes fun of your braces again, here’s what I want you to do. Just say, ‘So?’ and walk away. Don’t start arguing with him.”
 - *Explain your reasoning.* Instead of telling your child to respond a certain way, “Because I said so,” explain why. “If you act as if Andrew’s words don’t bother you, he’ll probably leave you alone. That’s because he’s only doing it to get you upset. But if you don’t take the bait, he won’t be getting what he wants.”
 - *Act it out.* Once you’ve gone over what to say with your child, have him practice it. “Okay, Kyle. Pretend I’m Andrew and I’m making fun of your braces during recess. What are you going to do?”

Having a “no-bullying game plan” won’t just help keep your child from being picked on. It may also make him more confident and successful overall!

Source: José Bolton, Sr., Ph.D., L.P.C. and Stan Graeve, M.A., *No Room for Bullies*, ISBN: 1-889322-67-9 (Boys Town Press, www.girlsandboystown.org/btpress).



Make your praise more effective

Your child has done something well, and you want her to know it. What should you do? Instead of giving a vague compliment like “Good job,” be sure to:

- *Stand close* to your child.
- *Make eye contact.*
- *Respond quickly*—as close to the good behavior as possible.
- *Be specific.* “Great! You put your book on the shelf after reading it.”
- *Show affection.* Smile and give your child a hug, a high five or a pat on the back.

Source: “How to Praise Your Child,” About.com, http://childparenting.about.com/c/ht/00/07/How_Praise_Child0962934092.htm.

Rethink motives behind behavior

Your child comes home from school, runs into her room and slams the door. Do you get angry because you assume she did it only to annoy you?

You may be confusing *her intent* with *how it impacts you*. That is, because what she did bothers you, you figure that’s why she did it.

But if you stop to consider that she’s upset—and not trying to get you upset—you may keep from reacting angrily.



Source: Scott Brown, *How to Negotiate with Kids ... Even When You Think You Shouldn't*, ISBN: 0-14-200398-0 (Penguin, www.penguin.com).

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