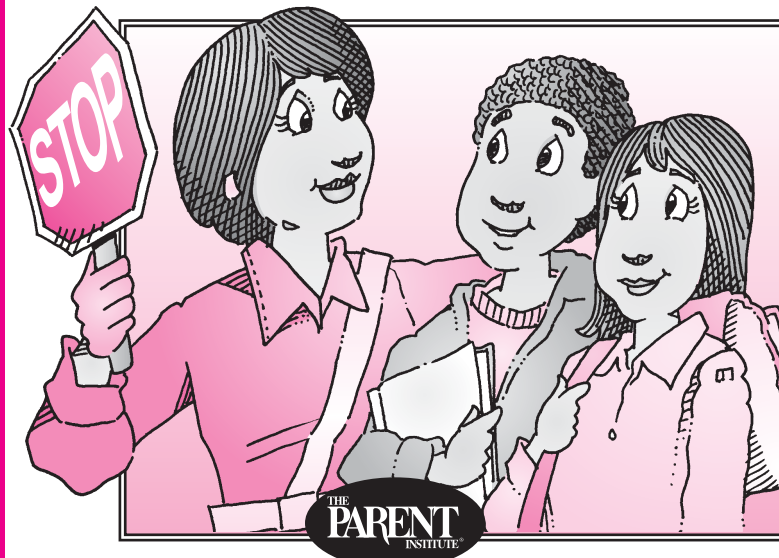


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BUILDING RESPECT FOR RULES, AUTHORITY & OTHER PEOPLE**E**

Ways Parents Can Help Their Children
Do Better in School



One of a Series of Booklets for Parents

T H E • D I S C I P L I N E • S E R I E S

A Well-Disciplined Child Has Respect for Rules, Authority And Other People

Our society is based on laws. Citizens develop rules and regulations to guide people's lives and they select officials with the authority to enforce them. Throughout life, a child will be expected to respect rules, authority and other people.

That's why schools work so hard to teach the discipline of respect. It's called *citizenship*. Children are graded on it. They're required to study it. And opportunities are provided for them to practice it.

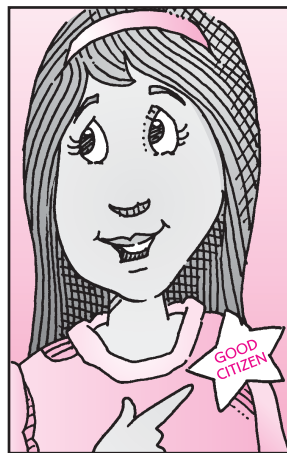
But schools alone cannot teach children all they need to know about respect. Nor can schools provide enough practice. Through day-to-day living and working with others, children really learn about respect. That means the best place to learn is at home—with parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, friends and neighbors.

This booklet is packed with practical tips, ideas and activities you can use every day to help build your child's respect for rules, authority and other people.

Tip: Don't expect to put all the ideas in this booklet into practice right away. The best way to make changes is gradually. Focus on one or two ideas at a time—and don't forget to celebrate progress!



Every child is unique, so we often use the singular pronoun. We'll alternate using "he/him" and "she/her" throughout this booklet.



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'Respect' is Not the Same as 'Obedience'

When teaching your child respect, it is important to understand that respect is not the same as obedience. All parents want respect. But many make the mistake of *demanding* respect from their kids.

They might say things like, "Sit up," "Stand straight" or "Don't ever talk to me like that!" And woe to the child who doesn't "toe the line."

What these parents don't realize is that they may not be getting respect at all. Parents who demand that children blindly do what they say may only be getting their children's angry obedience. Or their children may be obeying them out of fear. Fear teaches children something entirely different than respect.

Respect is a two-way street. The best way to teach children respect is to be respectful toward them. Children must learn how respect feels. Only then will they know how to give it to others.

An atmosphere of mutual respect creates an ideal climate for discipline at home and at school. Children who respect adults obey them because they *want* to. They understand that adults are looking out for their best interests.

Respect also creates an ideal climate for learning. That's why educators are so interested in teaching children respect. And respect improves family relationships, too. As one insightful child said, "If you respect your kids, they'll do anything to please you."



The best way to teach children respect is to be respectful toward them.

A QUIZ FOR PARENTS

Do You Show Your Child Respect?

Take this quiz to see how well you show your child respect. Answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below:

- ___ 1. I really listen when my child tells me something. I stop what I am doing. I set aside chores. I avoid interrupting.
- ___ 2. I am always fair. I listen to my child's side before I come to a conclusion.
- ___ 3. I display common courtesy to my child. I say "excuse me," "thank you," "please"—and never use expressions like "shut up."
- ___ 4. I honor my child's privacy. I give him some time to be alone. I avoid cleaning his room while he's away. I don't open his mail. I don't listen in on his telephone conversations.
- ___ 5. I give my child some choices—what to do, eat or wear; or when to do homework.
- ___ 6. I respect my child's decisions on all but the most critical topics—even if they are not what I would prefer. I let him sort things out for himself. I let him make some mistakes. I avoid saying, "I told you so."
- ___ 7. I talk openly and honestly with my child. I share my feelings and welcome new views. And no subject is "taboo" when we talk.
- ___ 8. I take my child's problems seriously. I try to answer his questions. I ask questions to help him find solutions.
- ___ 9. I solicit my child's opinion often. I ask, "Which do you think is best?" "What would you do in this situation?"
- ___ 10. I discipline my child privately—not in front of his friends.

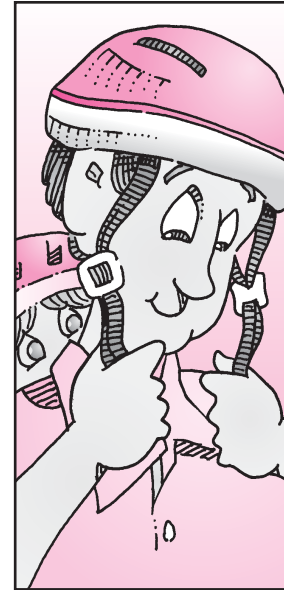


How did you do?

Each *yes* answer means you're showing your child respect. For each *no* answer, try some of the suggestions in the quiz to help build respect in your child.

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Are You a Role Model of Respect for Your Child?



Telling children they need to respect rules, authority and other people is important. But all the advice and lectures in the world won't make a dent if parents don't do themselves what they ask their children to do. To teach your child respect, you must be a model of respect. How well are you doing?

- Do you obey the laws (such as wearing your seat belt and obeying the speed limit)? Do you speak about the importance of doing so?
- Do you stay away from drugs?
- Do you speak respectfully of teachers, police officers and others in authority?
- Are you courteous and polite? Do you accept people who have beliefs different from your own?
- Do your actions show you respect your own parents? Do you speak to them respectfully? Do you help them?
- Do you talk about and try to live by the Golden Rule—"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"?
- Do you openly show moral reasoning—letting your child see you wrestle with such questions as, "What is the right thing to do?" "How would I want to be treated in this situation?" "What are likely consequences of my actions for others?"

"It's hard, if not impossible, to hold children to certain rules when parents brag about breaking laws."

—Dorothy Rich, *MegaSkills*

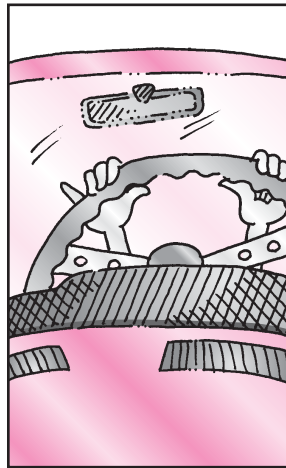
Show Your Child the Value of Rules

The first step in building respect for rules is to make rules important to your family. Children who must obey rules at home find it easier to comply with rules when they're away from home.

Develop an Understanding Of the Need for Rules

Discuss with your child what could happen when people don't follow the rules. Try some of these examples:

- **What could happen** if you put your arm out the school bus window?
- **What could happen** if there were no rules about when students can talk in class?
- **What could happen** if anyone of any age could drive a car?
- **What could happen** if people could drive on either side of the road?
- **What could happen** if you could take things from a store without paying for them?
- **Play a game**—like kickball, Monopoly® or Scrabble®—without any rules. After a few minutes, stop and talk about how things are going. After playing the game *with* rules, discuss the need for rules and laws in different areas of life.
- **Point out when you are following a rule**—such as stopping at a red light or obeying the speed limit. Discuss why it's important that you do. Point out that adults, as well as children, must follow rules, too.
- **Set rules for family meetings**—like rules for “talking and listening.” Point out whenever someone breaks a rule and note the effect it is having.



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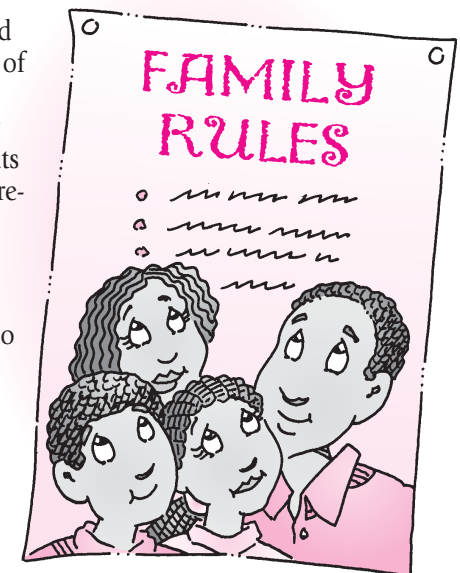
Teach Your Child To 'Play By the Rules'

- **Say “Thank you for remembering the rule”** when your child does so. Your encouragement will increase the likelihood that she will follow the rule in the future.
- **Encourage your child** to participate in team sports and other activities that promote following rules and working together.
- **Enforce your rules consistently.** A child will test a rule until she knows for sure that you expect her to obey it. If you sometimes let her “get away with” not following the rule, she won't take it seriously.

These Secrets Will Make Rules Work

To make rules that children will follow, involve them in making the rules whenever possible. Involving children also helps them understand that rules usually exist for a good reason. The more children are involved, the more likely they are to follow the rules—and to respect rules everywhere. It also helps to:

- **State rules positively.** Rules should tell your child what to do, instead of what *not* to do. Saying, “Be nice to each other” describes the behavior you want. Saying, “Don't fight” puts the undesirable behavior in the forefront of a child's mind.
- **Don't make rules you're not willing**—or able—to enforce.
- **Don't make rules so tough** that no one can follow them. Be sure you can follow them yourself.
- **Write rules down** on a “Family Rules” chart so everyone can see and remember them.



Building Respect For Authority Starts at Home

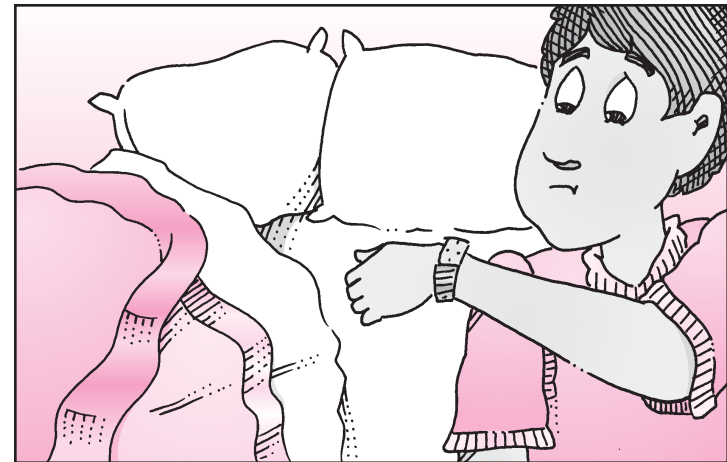
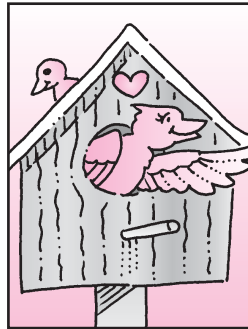
Establish Authority at Home

Until children can accept parents' authority at home, they are unlikely to accept authority anywhere. Here are some steps for establishing authority at home:

- **Make sure your child knows why you have rules.** Before your child can accept your authority, he must first believe that you care about him and are acting in his best interests.
- **Tell your child often that you love him.** No matter how old he is, he still needs to hear you say it.
- **Show your child that you love him.** Actions always speak louder than words.
- **Show your child that you respect him.** Check yourself on the "Quiz for Parents" on page two of this booklet.
- **Explain that you have rules because you care.** Your child should know that the rules you are enforcing exist because you love him. As you use your authority, explain that you are insisting that he follow the rules because you want the best for him. Your child should know that he must obey you, not because you are bigger or stronger, but because you care about him. Help your child see that your authority comes from your love.

"Respect for authority comes from understanding that legitimate authority figures are entrusted with the care of others. Without somebody in charge, you can't run a family, a school or a country. When people don't respect authority, things don't work very well and everybody suffers."

—Thomas Lickona, *Educating for Character*



- **Follow up and follow through.** Just because you establish your authority and set up rules doesn't mean your child will fall into line. Children will test to see what parents really believe and what the rules really are. You may say the rule is: "All beds must be made and rooms cleaned before leaving for school." But, if your child finds he can skip the cleanup if he's running late, he learns that the rule *really* is: "Clean your room before school—if there's time."
- **Be consistent with consequences.** Letting your child experience the results of his choices is very important. It empowers him—and you. It's the only way your child will learn that his actions have consequences—both good and bad. When your child makes poor choices, don't fret over what to do. Just let the natural consequences happen.

Help Your Child Evaluate Others' Authority, Too

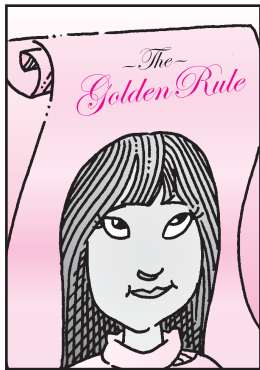
Talk with your child about how others in authority are acting in his best interests. Talk about school officials, police, local and national elected leaders.

Also teach your child to *question* others' authority if he sees that their actions are not appropriate. Your child should know that he can reject the authority of adults who urge him to use drugs and alcohol—or to do anything he thinks is not right.

Help Your Child Learn To Respect Others

A healthy respect for other people is one of the most important kinds of respect you can teach your child. It is the basis for almost all other desirable behaviors.

The #1 Rule Must Be the 'Golden Rule'



The best way to teach your child to live successfully with other people is to share the Golden Rule.

And the best way to teach the Golden Rule is to demonstrate it. If you are not sure how you are treating your child, just put yourself in her shoes and ask: "Would I want this done to me?" If your answer is "No" ("No, I wouldn't want to be ridiculed in front of my friends," for example), then you also must ask, "Why would I want to do this to my child?"

Help Your Child Feel Empathy

Observing the Golden Rule comes most naturally to children when they are taught to think about their own feelings and the feelings of others. If you catch your child teasing another child, for example, take the opportunity to teach her a lesson about how to treat others.

Wait until the scene has cooled off and ask in private, "How would you feel if someone did that to you?" It helps to have your child imagine how the other person feels. Feeling bad for the other person is far more powerful than your threatening, "If you ever do that again, I won't let you have a friend over."

You can also highlight your own acts of empathy by explaining what you are doing and why. "Aunt Martha is feeling lonely these days without Uncle Charlie, so I've invited her to stay with us for a few weeks."

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Teach Your Child to See People's Strengths

People often fail to respect others because they only see their faults. Help your child see that there are two ways of looking at most things. Discuss the following descriptions with your child. Try to think of actual people for each trait. See if you can add more characteristics.

<u>Instead of being:</u>	<u>A person might be:</u>
■ Rude	■ Open and direct
■ Bossy	■ A leader
■ Nosy	■ Curious
■ Stubborn	■ Determined

Celebrate Diversity

To live peacefully, children must learn to respect, accept and even enjoy people's differences. Here are some things you can do:

- **Watch the language** you use. Careless use of words that promote stereotypes can make a lasting impression.
- **Introduce your child** to people from different backgrounds.
- **Encourage your child** to study another language.
- **Show your child** that people with disabilities should be treated the same as everybody else.



Teach Tolerance of Others' Views

Tell your child how you have learned to get along with people who have beliefs different from your own. Share personal examples of how you got to know someone who seemed very different. Talking about how you learned to accept and appreciate them can help your child learn about tolerance.

Also tell your child that respecting someone's values or beliefs doesn't mean he has to *accept* them. Use personal examples. Talk about some of your own views, customs or traditions that may seem strange to others.

Teach Your Child Respect For School and Teachers

Students whose families respect education and hard work do very well in school. Here are some ways you can help your child develop a healthy respect for school, for school rules and teachers. That respect can lead to school success.

- **Get to know your child's teachers.** If possible, spend some time in your child's class. Volunteer to help and participate in school activities.
- **Demonstrate respect.** Talk about the importance of an education. Always return teachers' calls. Maintain a positive tone of voice.
- **Learn school rules and expectations.** Talk them over with your child and set reasonable consequences for following—and *not* following—the rules.
- **Monitor your child's school activities.** Make sure she's prepared for school. Ask about what she's studying. Review class and homework assignments. Praise effort and achievement.
- **Avoid taking your child out of school** for vacations, shopping excursions or other non-medical reasons. It sends the message that school isn't that important.
- **Speak positively about the school.** Your child will pick up on your attitude. If you have a concern, work with the school to solve it. Talk about how both you and the school are trying to help your child. Say that you are sure you can work out any problems.



- **Support school rules,** even if you disagree with them. Your child still has to follow them—and that's what you need to tell your child. Then talk with teachers and school administrators about changing a rule with which you disagree.
- **Get the facts.** When there's a problem, first talk with the school staff.

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Here Are Five Things You Should Not Do

1. **Don't focus on being your child's friend.** Your child really needs you to care enough to set limits and enforce them. You can have fun with your child, of course. But be a responsible parent first.
2. **Don't do everything for your child.** Regularly doing for your child what he can do for himself undermines his self-confidence and self-respect. Your child will respect you more when you aren't catering to his every whim.
3. **Don't be a nag.** If you have to repeat yourself over and over again, it shows that you don't think you've been heard—or believed—by your child. Repeating yourself tells your child that he can ignore you. Instead, ask your child to repeat what you said. Then say, "Great! Now that you know what to do, I won't mention it again." Hold your child responsible for doing what you asked.
4. **Don't try to be perfect.** Most children know that no one is perfect, even their parents. Your child will respect you more—and learn more from you—if you share with him some times when you were wrong, and how you handled them.
5. **Don't pamper your child.** Many parents enjoy pampering their children. But pampered children often don't respect and work well with others. They may feel it's their right to be served. They can become angry with teachers and others who don't meet their demands the way their parents do. And they may view cooperation and doing for others as signs of weakness. Pampered children know only *their* rights—what they can expect from others. They fail to learn what's expected of them. They don't understand that they, too, have responsibilities to others.



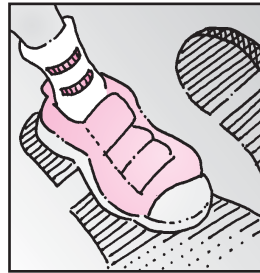
Promote Self-Respect

Children who are disrespectful often lack something they desperately need: self-respect.

If they don't value themselves as worthwhile human beings—despite their faults and imperfections—they will find it hard to value and respect other people. They will also have trouble following rules. People with little self-respect are more dependent on the approval of others. They are more influenced by peer pressure and less able to rely on their own judgment.

Self-respect requires a healthy measure of self-esteem. These tips can help you boost your child's self-regard:

- **Allow your child to pursue her own interests.** Then say how proud you are of her efforts.
- **Encourage small steps toward independence.** Turn over responsibility to your child as soon as she can handle it.
- **Comment sincerely** on your child's growing abilities every day.
- **Give credit where credit is due.** Parents aren't the only ones with good ideas. Create opportunities for your child to come up with good ideas and praise her when she does.
- **Teach your child to be honest with herself.** Tell her she might fool a lot of people, but she can never fool herself. She can never be proud of anything she gets by cheating, stealing or lying.
- **Show her how to assert herself.** Parents want children to share and be considerate of others. But it's not good when they will do anything to please others. If your child always sacrifices or compromises her own wants and needs, she won't earn others' respect—and she won't respect herself.
- **Promote responsible citizenship.** Children feel good about themselves when they know they are doing the right thing. Encourage your child to find ways to serve others and care for the environment.



In Summary:

- Schools alone cannot teach children all they need to know about respect. The best place to learn respect is at home—with parents, brothers and sisters, relatives, friends and neighbors.
- Respect is a two-way street—and it is not just obedience.
- The best way to teach children respect is to respect *them*. Children must learn how respect feels in order to give it to others.
- One of the most powerful ways parents can teach children respect is to be models of respect themselves.
- Children respect rules best when they understand them and help to develop them.
- Respect for authority comes from understanding that legitimate authority figures are acting in the best interests of others.
- Children learn to respect other people when they learn tolerance and appreciation for others' differences.
- If children don't respect *themselves* as worthwhile human beings—they will find it hard to respect other people.



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