

Raising Great Kids

Want to raise a well-behaved child? Want your youngster to be excited about learning? You can do both! Use these ideas to encourage good behavior and a love of learning.

Good behavior

When your child behaves well, he is happier, and so are you. Try these everyday tips to help him learn to follow the rules.

Beyond "good job"

Praise will build your child's confidence and encourage him to cooperate. Try, "You made your bed so neatly!" or, "It was nice of you to help your sister out of the car." *Tip:* Leaving thank-you notes on his pillow or next to his placemat will make him feel good and also help him practice reading (*example:* "Thanks for being patient at the bank").



Little helpers

Ask for your youngster's help with everyday tasks. Being able to carry in groceries or stir muffin mix will make her feel important. Best of all, she'll see that doing what you ask can be fun. Be sure to show her the results of her efforts: a stocked refrigerator, a fresh batch of muffins.

Listening games

Make listening and following directions enjoyable. For example, at cleanup time you can play Simon Says. Remind your child to do what you say only when he hears "Simon says." Then, mix silly commands with real ones: "Simon says put all your trucks in the closet" and "Simon says twirl around." Every few times, leave out "Simon says" to help him pay attention.

Get the wiggles out

Regular physical activity can help prevent misbehavior, and it's essential for good health. Be sure your little one has plenty of time to burn off energy each day. Take her outside,



or if the weather is bad, look for an indoor playground at a store or mall. You might also set aside one room in your house where she can run and play with balls and other outdoor toys (hallway, recreation room).

Limit "No"

Save "no" for things that really matter, like hurting others or using unkind words. When your youngster does something less serious, consider replacing "no" with a gentle reminder. For instance, instead of "No shouting!" try, "Please use your inside voice." Or be playful: If she's being too loud, point the TV remote at her and pretend to turn down her volume.

Invest time

Try to find time in your daily schedule to give your child undivided attention. You'll both enjoy these moments, and he'll be less likely to compete for your attention with siblings or while you're on the phone. You might read a book or have a short conversation. For instance, ask him to tell you his favorite insect or shape, and then tell him yours.



continued

Learning excitement

Send your youngster to school eager to learn and motivated to do her best. Here's how.

ABCs and 123s

Practice basic skills like letters and numbers everywhere you go. For example, before you get in the car, ask your child to choose a letter. While you drive, have her look for things that begin with that letter. For "G," your youngster might find grass or a goose. Have her make a tally mark on a piece of paper every time she sees one and then add them up when she gets out of the car. How many did she find?

Silly storytelling

Experiment with storytelling to improve your little one's language skills and encourage creativity. In the grocery store, make up a story about the food. For example, you could start with "Sammy Spaghetti climbed down off the shelf to visit Max Macaroni!" Take turns adding lines to the story.

Hall of fame

Create a special spot in your home (stairwell, kitchen wall) where you can display your youngster's schoolwork. Ask him to show it to visitors. The pride he feels will motivate him to work hard on school projects. *Tip:* If he has work displayed on a school bulletin board, make a point of stopping by to see it.



Play = learning

Whenever possible, tie learning to playing. For example, to give your child practice reading, ask him to "read" books to his stuffed animals—he can turn the pages and use the pictures to tell the story. Or fill a toy basket with tools like a flashlight and a magnifying glass. Have him build observation skills by walking around the house and looking at items more closely.

Special talents

Help your youngster discover her strengths. Then, give her opportunities to use them. For example, maybe she has a good memory. Say, "You're good at remembering things—could you remind me to stop for bread on the way home?" Also, encourage her to try different things so she can find out what she enjoys. You could let her explore with different art materials (watercolors, chalk, clay) or practice tumbling at home. Or you might enroll her in a free or low-cost art class at a library or a gymnastics clinic at a community center.



Build family bonds

Keeping in touch with your child from a young age will make it easier to stay connected as he gets older. Try these three suggestions:

1. Have weekly family time (Thursday evening, Sunday afternoon). Gather in the living room for show-and-tell. Each person could share something they did that week. Then, play a game, such as Operation or Candyland. Finish up with a healthy snack.
2. Find a family hobby. Start by brainstorming a list of ideas. Then, try a few to see which ones everyone enjoys the most.

For instance, you could experiment with cooking or flying kites. Or your family might like hiking or bike riding.

3. Learn about your past together. Have your youngster ask older relatives what countries your ancestors came from. Then, go to the library to learn more. Let your child experience the culture by trying out some of the customs he reads about. For example, if you have relatives from Brazil, you might dance to samba music or make masks to celebrate Carnival, a winter festival.



Early Years