

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Guiding Students for School Success

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## Healthy habits yield school success

You know that exercise, sleep and nutritious foods are good for your child. But did you know that they're good for her education, too?

Experts say that:

- **Exercise helps kids stretch their legs**—and their brainpower! In one study, kids were tested academically on two days. On one day, they had just rested. On the other, they had walked on a treadmill. Scores were higher on the exercise day! Recess and P.E. are great opportunities for exercise, but encourage physical activity at home also.
- **Sleep is essential to life and learning.** Without enough sleep, kids may have difficulty at school. Talk with your doctor about the right amount, which will depend on your child's age. When scheduling family activities, make sure they don't interfere with your child's healthy sleep routines.
- **Diet has an effect on school success.** Research suggests that eating breakfast improves student performance. What's best for breakfast? Consider "whole" (not processed) foods, such as oatmeal. These foods are more likely to be absorbed slowly, so they provide energy over a longer period of time.



Sources: Bill Klemm, "Can Exercise Help Kids Do Better in School?" BeWell@Stanford, <http://stanford.wellsphere.com/brain-health-article/can-exercise-help-kids-do-better-in-school/727359> and Allison Aubrey, "A Better Breakfast Can Boost a Child's Brainpower," NPR, [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5738848](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5738848).

## Are your penalties out of date?

Time-outs may have been fine when your misbehaving child was in preschool. But now that he's older, you might curb his poor behavior with "bigger kid" consequences such as:

- **Taking away his music** for a while.
- **Sending him to bed** 30 minutes early.
- **Suspending his phone** privileges for a time.
- **Having him come inside** if he's playing outdoors.



Source: Shari Steelsmith, *Go to Your Room! Consequences that Teach*, ISBN: 0-9650477-2-5 (RaeField-Roberts and Parenting Press, [www.parentingpress.com](http://www.parentingpress.com)).

## Natural consequences teach valuable lessons

When your child behaves well, good things happen naturally. He might get a compliment or enjoy a privilege. Misbehavior has natural consequences, too.

If your child leaves a favorite outfit on the floor, for example, it might not get washed. Let your child learn from such minor mistakes. That's much more effective than getting angry or fixing her every problem.



Source: "Using Consequences to Help Children Learn," University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, [www.arfamilies.org/family\\_life/parenting/character/consequences\\_help\\_children\\_learn.htm](http://www.arfamilies.org/family_life/parenting/character/consequences_help_children_learn.htm).

Bust these myths about bullying:

- **Myth:** Only boys bully.  
**Fact:** Boys and girls can be bullies, but they may act out differently. Often, boys bully with violence, while girls use "weapons" like gossip.
- **Myth:** Bigger classes and schools have more bullying.  
**Fact:** Research shows no relationship between class or school size and bullying.



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](http://www.girlsandboystown.org/btpress)).

## Conquer your child's 'forgetfulness'

Does your child often "forget" to bring her homework home so she won't have to do it? The next time she tries this assignment-avoiding strategy:



- **Give her a different quiet task** during regular homework time, such as looking for an interesting article in the newspaper.
- **Ask her to review** a previous assignment or preview a chapter of an upcoming lesson.

Source: Jeanne Shay Schumm, Ph.D., *How to Help Your Child with Homework*, ISBN: 1-57542-168-2 (Free Spirit Publishing, [www.freespirit.com](http://www.freespirit.com)).

## Don't give up on discipline

You feel like you've tried everything to get your child to cooperate, but the results are disappointing. If that's the case, review some discipline guidelines. Make sure you are:

- **Positive.** Tell your child specifically what you want—not what you don't want. "Please put away your toys" is more effective than "Don't make a mess."
- **Empowering.** When possible, offer choices instead of making demands. "Would you like to do spelling or math homework first?"
- **Teaching.** Instead of thinking of your child as "disobedient," consider what new skills she needs to learn. Then think of positive ways to "coach" her to success!



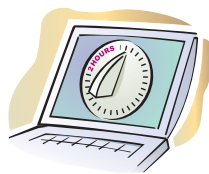
Source: Dr. Marvin Marshall, *Discipline without Stress, Punishments or Rewards*, ISBN: 0-9700606-1-0 (PiperPress, www.PiperPress.com).

### Questions & Answers

**Q:** My child is obsessed with all things electronic, from the TV to the computer to video games! I enjoy these things, too, and don't want to ban them outright. But how can I set some limits so we'll both "unplug" a little?

**A:** By doing just that: setting limits! Technology can be fun and useful and it likely plays a central role in your child's education. (Take a look at how many of his school assignments require using the Internet.) Still, too much of any "good thing" can quickly become a bad thing, and TV/computer use is no exception. To get a handle on your family's screen time:

- **Set a time limit.** Experts suggest that kids spend no more than two hours in front of a screen (TV, video game or computer) every day. So consider limiting your child—and yourself—to that amount.
- **Don't use it as a reward or punishment.** Avoid turning the "screen" into something your child earns when he behaves or loses when he doesn't. This can make it more important than it should be.
- **Offer alternatives.** Don't simply say "No TV!" to your child and then walk away. Help him find something else to do. Who knows? He may discover that building a birdhouse with you is much more interesting than flipping through channels, anyway.
- **Make TV time more active.** Who says you have to sit around during commercials? Challenge your child to a jumping-jack or push-up contest during program breaks!



Source: "Helpful Ways to Reduce Screen Time," The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/screen-time.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/live-it/screen-time.htm).

## Avoid arguments by understanding

Sometimes a child just wants to be heard before obeying.

If your child says, "I don't want to do my homework," you might respond with, "I understand. If you could skip it, what would you do instead?" Spend a minute or two talking about what each of you would do without responsibilities.



Of course, you have to return to reality: "Well, we can't just do anything we want to. I have to do the dishes, and you have to do homework."

## Discipline stepchild with calm authority

Do you ever hear, "You're not my parent!" when disciplining your stepchild? There's a reason he's using those words—they hurt. And if he's upset, he may be hoping to get you just as upset.

But don't take the bait. Instead, when you respond:

- **Say, "You're right.** I'm not your parent, but I do care about you. And this is the house rule."
- **Stay calm and authoritative** and let your stepchild know that you support his parent.

Source: Erika Lutz, "Common Stepfamily Discipline Issues," *Family Education*, <http://life.familyeducation.com/stepfamilies/discipline/47600.html>.

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