

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

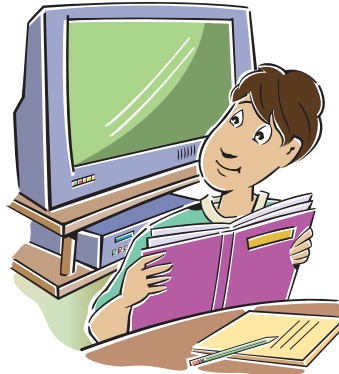
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Guiding Students for School Success

## Discipline's top goals are surprisingly simple

Disciplining children is a tough job. And yet, it can be summarized in three simple steps: Be firm, fair and consistent. Wonder what this looks like? Consider these examples:

- 1. Firm.** Your rule is "No TV before homework is finished." Your child has put off his studies. Now he doesn't have time for his favorite show. He wants you to bend the rules. "My homework won't take long. All my friends will be talking about the show at school! Please!" You enforce the rule anyway. Your child is disappointed, but he learns that you mean business.
- 2. Fair.** You make a short list of sensible household rules. Your child shares his opinion. "Dad, it's not fair that my bedtime is 8:00. I can't fall asleep that early." He's right. "Good point," you say. "You can read in bed until 8:30." Post the rules—stated clearly and briefly—as a helpful reminder. Adjust them as your child matures, but the final decision will be yours.
- 3. Consistent.** You've enforced key rules. Your child knows that you mean what you say. But he can't help testing you. "All my friends play this video game! You're the meanest dad in the world!" You follow your own rule: "When my child tests the limits, I respond firmly and respectfully." No parent is perfect. But planning ahead goes a long way.



## Sleep matters

If your child seems cranky and unfocused, take a look at his sleep habits. Kids six to nine years of age need roughly 10 hours of sleep per night.



If your child is not getting enough sleep, he may:

- **Become irritable.**
- **Have trouble focusing in class.**
- **Become over-active.**

To avoid these problems and ensure that your child goes to school alert and ready to learn:

- **Enforce** a reasonable bedtime.
- **Establish** a calm "winding down" routine before bed.
- **Try playing** soft, soothing music.

Source: "All About Sleep," KidsHealth, <http://kidshealth.org/parent/general/sleep/sleep.html#>.

If your child has trouble following instructions, repeat your request, starting with her name.



Instead of saying, "Pick up your books, Hannah," try: "Hannah, pick up your books." She's more likely to respond if she hears her name first. And if you stand close to her, it will be harder to ignore your request.

Source: Stephanie Dolgoff, "Oh, Behave!" *Parenting*, April 2009 (The Parenting Group, [www.parenting.com](http://www.parenting.com)).

## Tantrums are not the end of the world!

There's nothing like a good meltdown from your child to make you doubt yourself as a parent.



It doesn't mean he's a bad child or you're a bad parent. All children "lose it" sometimes. So don't let these rough moments get you down. Remain calm and ignore the behavior if at all possible.

Remember to give attention to your child's good behavior.

Source: Dr. Becky Bailey, *There's Got to Be a Better Way: Discipline That Works*, ISBN: 1-889609-03-X (Loving Guidance, Inc., [www.consciousdiscipline.com](http://www.consciousdiscipline.com)).

## Become your child's biggest cheerleader

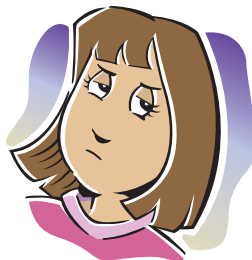
Want to motivate your youngster to try her best?

Remember to support her even when she falls short! If she studies hard for a math quiz, for example, but only brings home a so-so grade, give her a hug anyway. "I know you wanted a higher grade, but I'm so proud of how hard you tried." Your encouraging words may inspire her to buckle down just as much next time.



## Help your child express herself with courtesy

As your child gets older, you may notice that she challenges you more often. It's natural for kids to seek independence by expressing their views, but unfortunately, they're not mature enough yet to put courtesy first. Outside influences, such as TV shows with sassy characters, don't make things any easier. To build your child's independence and courtesy:



- **Reduce stress.** If your child is worried about school or friendships, if she's disappointed or tired, it can show in her attitude. Be available to listen.
- **Stay focused.** Pick one behavior (such as eye rolling) to work on at a time.
- **Be firm.** Set guidelines and expectations for polite behaviors and follow through with consequences if needed.
- **Reward success.** Compliment good behavior.

Source: Margery Rosen, "Deal With Tweenage Attitude," MSN, <http://lifestyle.msn.com/your-life/family-parenting/articles.aspx?cp-documentid=8326709>.

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** With making breakfast, packing lunches, tracking down book bags and getting my kids to the bus stop on time, mornings around here are frantic—and filled with arguing. How can I make our morning routine less stressful?

**A:** You said the magic word: *routine*. To bring order to your mornings, you need to establish some written-in-stone routines to make getting out the door easier for everyone. Here are three to try:

1. **A night-before routine.** See which tasks can be done the evening before and divide them up among your kids. Can someone pack lunches while someone else makes sure backpacks and jackets are by the front door? Can each child choose the next day's outfit and set it out before bedtime? The more you can accomplish at night, the fewer headaches you'll have in the morning.
2. **A breakfast routine.** School mornings aren't the time to turn into a short-order cook, so keep your breakfast menu simple. Instead of asking your kids what they'd like to eat, put a couple of boxes of cereal and some fruit on the table and let them serve themselves. Save the more elaborate offerings for weekends.
3. **A "get out the door" routine.** Help your kids develop a mental checklist to run through each morning. (Or write it out and post it on the fridge.) Just be sure to keep it simple: Teeth brushed? Check. Hair combed? Check. Lunchbox in backpack? Check. A less chaotic, smoother morning? Check!



## Make the most of disagreements

When your child argues with you, how do you react? Remember that your response teaches your child. It says, "This is how you should behave when you disagree with someone."

To be a role model during a conflict:

- Stick to the point.
- Discuss the present situation.
- Listen well.
- Do not judge.
- Be understanding.
- Stay calm and respectful.

Source: Carl E. Pickhardt, Ph.D., *The Everything Parent's Guide to the Strong-Willed Child*, ISBN: 1-59337-381-3 (Adams Media Corp., [www.adamsmedia.com](http://www.adamsmedia.com)).

## Try a change of pace right after school

Your child spends most of his day sitting quietly at his desk. So he will need a change of pace when he arrives home.

Encourage your child to try an activity. He might:

- **Take a bike ride.**
- **Work on a hobby** or a craft project.
- **Cook something** with your supervision.
- **Play catch** with a friend.



Make a list of some activities your child can do right after school.

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