

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Pine Ridge Elementary

Parents Guiding Students for School Success

Your child's academic success requires a team approach

Many parents approach a conference with their child's teacher with some anticipation, interest, and often a bit of concern. "What will the teacher say about my child?" "What does the teacher think about me?" Rather than worry, be confident! No child, teacher or parent is perfect. Keep in mind that it takes teamwork to create school success.



To prepare for a positive experience:

- **List the topics you want to discuss.** Since time is short, address priorities first. You might ask questions such as, "Is my child reading at grade level?" or "Is my child getting along well with other students?"
- **Be open-minded.** Listen to what the teacher has to say about your child's strengths and weaknesses. Remember that you both want your child to succeed. Discuss how you can work together toward that goal. Be specific. What strategies will help at school? How can you help at home?
- **Stay in touch.** Plan how you'll follow up after the meeting. You might even volunteer in class and observe how your child is doing. Assure the teacher that you want to stay informed and involved.

Keep your child calm during project time!

Does your child become frantic anytime a big project looms? Here are some things you can do to keep him from melting down:

- **Have him mark** the project deadline on a large calendar. It's a clear reminder of when all work must be done.
- **Stockpile supplies.** He may be less anxious if there's a stash of index cards, sticky notes and highlighters at hand.
- **Help him break up** the assignment. Writing an entire report can seem overwhelming. Dividing it into smaller tasks like "make an outline" and "write a topic sentence," each with a mini deadline, makes the assignment more manageable.



Chores aren't just about raking leaves or folding laundry. They're also about helping your child develop a sense of responsibility.



To help your child get the most from her chores, be sure they are:

- **Age appropriate.**
- **Clearly defined.**
- **Part of her daily routine.**

As your child completes a few small jobs each week, be sure to praise her developing sense of responsibility—and acknowledge her contribution to the family.

Exercise can boost brain activity

What's one simple thing that improves mood, focus and thinking? Exercise!



Encourage your child to get moving. Schedule time for exercise every day. Plan activities he likes, such as kickball in the park or a quick game of Simon Says, before he sits down to do his homework.

When your child's physical activity increases, so will his brain activity—leading to improved focus at school.

Source: R. Kajander and T. Culbert, *Be Fit, Be Strong, Be You*, Free Spirit Publishing.

Take 10 seconds to gather your thoughts

It's important to correct your child's poor behavior quickly. But wait ... not *too* quickly.

That is, don't lay into her if you're still fuming about neglected chores or a missed school assignment deadline.

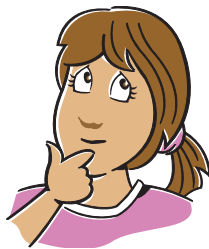


Instead, give yourself a short breather. Use this tried-and-true method: Count to 10 before you start dealing with the misbehavior. It may reduce your anger and help you stay in control.

Source: "How to Teach Good Behavior: Tips for Parents," American Family Physician, www.aafp.org/afp/2002/1015/p1463.html.

'Behavior-consequence connections' teach the best lessons

The purpose of using a consequence for misbehavior is to teach, not to punish. Some consequences happen naturally, such as missing a fun activity after dawdling too long, or getting a bad grade as a result of not studying. Others need to be imposed by parents. Knowing how to use consequences can be the key to successful discipline. These tips will help:



- **State consequences in a positive manner.** Instead of saying, “No, you can’t play because you haven’t finished reading,” say, “Yes, you can play as soon as you finish your reading assignment.”
- **Make the connection.** For example, if your child fights with her brother, a consequence might be to have her list her brother’s three best qualities and discuss them at the dinner table.

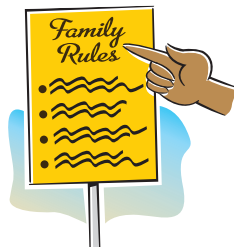
Questions & Answers

Q: My child hardly ever seems to listen to me, and she always feels the need to challenge our family rules. How can I teach her to respect authority at school and other public places when I don’t feel like I have any in my own home?

A: First, remember that you are the adult and you are in charge. Your job is to set fair, reasonable rules and then enforce them consistently. Your child will have more respect for your authority when she sees that you’re serious—and that tantrums or backtalk won’t sway you.

Here are some things you can do:

- **Give your child some control.** Let her make some decisions occasionally. Keep them simple: “Would you like to start your homework now or after dinner?” If her reply is, “Neither,” your response should be simple: “Okay, I’ll decide for you.”
- **Be clear.** If your first reaction is to get angry when your child doesn’t do something you ask, step back. Make sure she knows what you are asking her to do. For instance, you may know exactly what you mean when you say, “Clean your room.” But to your child, your meaning might not be so obvious. Instead, try, “Make your bed, put your dirty clothes in the hamper and empty your trash.” Sometimes, what looks like a lack of respect is really a lack of understanding.
- **Stay calm.** Establishing your authority takes time, so don’t lose your cool in the process. Part of a child’s growing independence involves challenging rules and boundaries. Just remain firm and with time, your child won’t just recognize your authority—she’ll come to respect it.



Request advice about homework

In many families, homework time can be a discipline challenge. When students struggle with homework or refuse to do it altogether, parents are often confused about what to do.



If you are not sure about how to proceed or how involved you should be, contact your child’s teacher. Ask for some guidelines.

- For example, you might ask:
- “*Should I help* my child with homework?” “How much?”
- “*Do you want* me to correct mistakes with him?”
- “*How much time* should my child spend on homework?”
- “*What if my child* refuses to do homework?”

Avoid discipline conflict in stepfamilies

Discipline is just one of the tricky issues stepfamilies may face. To handle discipline issues smoothly:

- **Let the biological parent** do the correcting when possible.
- **Explain house rules** as a couple. Show your child that you’re a team.

Becoming a family is a process. It takes time to build love and respect in stepfamilies.

Source: K. Greder and others, “Parenting Young Teens: Parenting in Stepfamilies,” Iowa State University, University Extension, www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1547C.pdf.

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