

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Pine Ridge Elementary

Parents Guiding Students for School Success

Use a simple approach to discipline

The most effective discipline strategy can be summarized with this simple advice: Be firm, fair and consistent. Here's what it looks like:

- **Be firm.** Your rule is: No TV before homework is finished. Your child has put off his studies and now his favorite program is getting ready to start. He wants you to bend the rules. "Everyone will be talking about the show at school tomorrow! I promise I won't make this mistake again! Please!" Enforce the rule anyway. Your child may be disappointed, but he will soon learn that you mean what you say.
- **Be fair.** You make a short list of household rules and ask your child to share his opinion. "Dad, it's not fair that my bedtime is 8:00. I can't fall asleep that early." You might say, "Good point. You can read in bed until 8:30." Be willing to adjust the rules as your child matures, but the final decision should always be yours.
- **Be consistent.** Your child should know that if you *say it*, you *mean it*—every time. But part of being a kid is testing parents. "Why can't I get this video game? All my friends have it. You're the meanest dad in the world!" Despite any frustration you may feel, when your child tests the limits, listen respectfully and respond firmly.



Address new school year jitters

The start of a new school year is always a big transition, whether a child is starting school for the first time, going to a new school or just moving up a grade.



If your child seems quieter, moodier or more anxious these days, here's how you can help ease her jitters:

- **Talk to her—and listen.** Let your child know you're always there to listen to her concerns.
- **Reassure her.** Remind your child that it's normal to be anxious about the new school year.
- **Seek help.** If your child's distress does not improve after a few of weeks, talk to her teacher.

An easy way to avoid arguments with your child is to state facts, not opinions.



For example:

- **Opinion:** "You never pick up after yourself!"
- **Fact:** "Your notebooks are scattered on the floor."

The first statement ("You never ...") practically invites an angry reply from your child. But the second is a simple statement of fact, and one that's hard for your child to argue with.

Source: S. Brown, *How to Negotiate with Kids ... Even When You Think You Shouldn't*, Viking.

Get involved now for year-long success

Research is clear on the value of parent involvement. When parents and schools work together, kids do better in school.



Many teachers create volunteer lists at the start of the year. Sign up now if possible.

Find ways to help at home, too. Establish and supervise a regular homework time, compliment your child's efforts, and read as a family.

If you have questions about your child's learning or behavior, talk with the teacher as soon as possible.

Disagree respectfully

When your child argues with you, how do you react? Remember that your response teaches your child how he should behave when he disagrees with someone. To model respectful behavior:



- **Listen** respectfully.
- **Stick** to the point.
- **Do not** bring up past issues.
- **Do not** judge.
- **Be** understanding.
- **Stay** calm.

Source: C.E. Pickhardt, Ph.D., *The Everything Parent's Guide to the Strong-Willed Child*, Adams Media Corp.

Chores teach more than responsibility

Children learn responsibility from chores, but that's not all they learn! Helping around the house builds independence, respect—and academic skills.

For example:

- **Helping with laundry** can teach important math skills: sorting and categorizing. Make suggestions such as, “Let’s make separate piles for everyone in the family.” “Try sorting the socks by color, by pattern or by the words printed on them.”
- **Tidying up** is a perfect opportunity to work on organization skills. Your child can pick spots for items, such as a box for trading cards or a shelf for books. He can also alphabetize books by author or arrange them by size.
- **Watering plants** teaches about biology and the environment. What do plants need to stay alive? What happens if he forgets to water them? What if he waters them too much?



Questions & Answers

Q: Mornings are frantic at our house. With making breakfast, packing lunches, tracking down book bags and getting to the bus stop on time, school days begin with a lot of stress. How can I make our morning routine less chaotic?

A: You said the magic word: routine. To bring order back to your mornings, you need to establish some written-in-stone rituals that will make getting out the door easier for everyone.

Here are three to try:

1. **A nighttime routine.** Figure out which tasks can be done the evening before, and divide them up. Can someone pack lunches while someone else puts backpacks and jackets by the front door? Can each child choose the next day’s outfit and set it out before going to bed? The more things you can accomplish at night, the less chaos 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 children 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 children develop a mental checklist to run through each morning. If they need something more concrete, write it out and post it on the fridge or where everyone can easily see it. Be sure to keep it simple: Teeth brushed? Check. Hair combed? Check. Lunchbox in backpack? Check. A smoother, calmer morning? Check!



Sleep habits matter



If your child seems cranky and unfocused, take a look at her sleep habits. School-age children need 10 to 11 hours of sleep per night.

If your child isn’t getting enough sleep, she may have trouble paying attention in class.

To ensure that your child is well rested and ready to learn:

- **Enforce** a reasonable bedtime.
- **Establish** a calm “winding down” routine before bed.
- **Switch off** electronics at least one hour before bed.
- **Keep** the TV and mobile devices out of your child’s bedroom.

Connect with your child’s teachers

Who are your best allies when it comes to your child’s education? His teachers!

Your child’s teachers can offer insight into what happens in the classroom. They can tell you about their expectations regarding behavior and academics. You can also learn how well your child is meeting those expectations.

So take time to connect with your child’s teachers early in the school year, whether in person, by phone or via email. They could be the most important connections you make all year!

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