

Teaching Children Manners

Children must learn respect for others or they will never learn to respect themselves. Children begin developing respect for others by first developing it for their parents. At an early age children should be taught to behave in a mannerly fashion towards their parents. A child should not be allowed to call their parents (or any adult) by their first name. They should learn to address adults by their title, such as: Mr. or Mrs., Mother or Father, Doctor, Pastor and so on.... When answering an adult they should always answer "Yes, Sir" or "Yes, Ma'am". Children must learn that when an adult speaks they need to listen and follow instructions.

Where does a parent start?

- ◆ Start with the "magic words" – please and thank you. The most important way to teach your child good manners are to show good manners. Remember kids model their parents. The "do as I say, not as I do" approach to manners will not work. Parents must set a good example.
- ◆ Reward good behavior as well as good manners and let your children know it is appreciated.
- ◆ If your child forgets their manners, gently remind them. Do not make a big deal out of it. Children tend to rebel when nagged at.
- ◆ Start a behavior sticker chart that points out good manners. Have your child help set up the good behavior chart that lists all the manners that they are going to try and follow. Set a behavior goal with your child and have a reward for when the goal is reached. Post the chart where the child has visual access to it every day. Point out how many new stickers they are getting and how excited you are for them.
- ◆ Practice good table manners at home. You may even have a pretend restaurant night. Teach your children good etiquette so they will be prepared when attending a social event or family outing to a restaurant.
- ◆ Explain that they get privileges and special outings when they show good behavior.
- ◆ Remind your child before arriving at a theatre, restaurant or social outing that good behavior is expected.
- ◆ When a child shows rude behavior, don't yell or nag, that just gives them more attention. Immediately, after the social downfall, firmly and politely let your child know that behavior will not be tolerated. Take away a privilege or toy to help remind your child you expect good manners at all times.
- ◆ Read children's books to your child that point out good and bad behavior. Let them tell you about the story in their own words, this allows them to think about the behavior.

When introducing manners work on one thing at a time, manners are a learning process. Don't overwhelm your child in the beginning. Start with the basics: please and thank you, excuse me, wait your turn, don't interrupt a conversation, addressing an adult by their title, phone etiquette, table manners and so on. Always gently remind your child of good manners. Be a good example and over time, good manners and good behavior will be second nature for your child.