

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Francis Scott Key School #76  
Mary L. Booker, Principal

Guiding Students for School Success

## Look for opportunities to be positive

Children's misbehavior at home can lead to misbehavior at school. And sometimes it can be downright frustrating, making it too easy to rely on punishment. One way to help correct misbehavior is to focus on the positive.

When your child *isn't* misbehaving, try to:

- **Pay attention** to what he does well. It's especially important to note behaviors you want to encourage. If he usually resists getting out of bed in the morning, compliment him whenever he rises on time and isn't rushing to catch the school bus.
- **Offer choices** so your child won't argue as much. A child who dislikes chores might be more receptive to, "You can pick today. Would you rather take out the trash or put away the clean dishes?" Then thank him for his work.
- **Make jobs enjoyable**—or at least tolerable. Challenge your child to a "room-cleaning race." Who can straighten a room the fastest? Or play upbeat music to motivate your child through a task.
- **Offer rewards** for behaviors that are tough to learn. Perhaps your child is intimidated by writing book reports, so he puts them off until the last minute. Say, "Write down the steps to this project. Complete one step each day. Then we'll be able to enjoy a movie together on Friday."



Source: "Behavior Problems Guide," [Keepkidshealthy.com](http://Keepkidshealthy.com), [www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/treatmentguides/behavior.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/treatmentguides/behavior.html).

## Let your child experience natural consequences

Your fifth grader doesn't blink when you ground her. What should you do? Instead of enforcing a penalty each time she misbehaves, let her experience some natural consequences. For instance, if she forgets her math book *again*, don't bail her out. Let her endure the poor grade. If she won't clear her schoolwork from the dinner table? Fine. Let spills on her papers be a natural consequence.



Source: Jean DuRussel-Weston, "A Word About Disciplining Your Child," The University of Michigan Health System, [www.med.umich.edu/pediatrics/medped/pptom/tom201.htm](http://www.med.umich.edu/pediatrics/medped/pptom/tom201.htm).

When you and your child argue, ask yourself



an important question: "Is this about control or is it about discipline?" If you're simply trying to control—not teach—your child, stop.

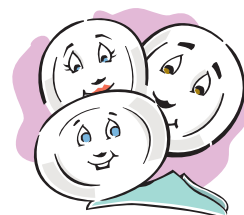
Make sure you always:

- **Show respect** for your child; he'll learn to respect others.
- **Help your child** learn important lessons when you discipline.

Source: Kimberly Keith, "Child Discipline Series," About.com, <http://childparenting.about.com/cs/discipline/a/childdiscipline.htm>.

## What's for dinner? Better behavior!

The research is clear. Kids who regularly eat dinner with their families have fewer



behavior problems than kids who don't. Fewer behavior problems at home can also translate into better learning at school.

A two-year study shows that families who share stories at the table and get their children to join in are most likely to have kids with high self-esteem. The study doesn't say that dinnertime chitchat *causes* kids to be well-adjusted, but it does show a relationship between the two.

Source: Jennifer Huger, "Talking With Your Mouth Full," *The Washington Post*, October 25, 2005, [www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/22/AR2005102200033.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/22/AR2005102200033.html).

## Asking for help can boost self-confidence

Children like to feel special and needed. Believe it or not, you can make your child feel this way while expecting her to behave.

You might say, "Grandma's coming over. You're so good at making things look pretty. Could you help me straighten the living room?" That's much better than, "You left the living room a mess. Clean it up!"

Source: Jane Nelsen, Ed.D., "Seven ways busy parents can help their children feel special," [www.positivediscipline.com/articles/7\\_Ways.html](http://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/7_Ways.html).

## Take *don't* out of your instructions

When parents give warnings, they often begin with the word “don’t”—“Don’t tease her!” “Don’t put that there!” But there’s usually a more pleasant alternative—“Please say nice things.” “Put that on the top shelf.” You could also say:

- “Pour slowly,” rather than “Don’t spill.”
- “Talk when you’ve finished eating,” not “Don’t talk with food in your mouth.”
- “You can call your friends when you’ve finished your homework,” and not “Don’t touch that phone!”
- “Play ball outside,” versus “Don’t throw the ball in here.”

Use creativity to come up with positive statements. Imagine putting the word “do” at the beginning, instead of “don’t.”

Source: Pat Steffens, “Positive Approach to Discipline,” University of Nebraska, Lincoln, <http://ianrpubs.unl.edu/family/g1190.htm>.



## Questions & Answers

**Q: My child has such a bad attitude toward school! He’s smart, but he barely even does his work. I’m tired of punishing him for it. How can I motivate him instead?**

**A:** You’re right on target. It sounds like your child’s problem is motivation. You’re also right about punishment not being the answer. Sure, if he’s rude or misbehaves, you need to enforce consequences. But help him get motivated about school and you may prevent his bad behavior from snowballing.

Here’s what you can do to help:

- **Communicate.** Talk to your child about school every day. Ask how things went. Pay attention to his answers. Show him that you care about his schooling.
- **Praise him.** Did he study hard all week for a test? Did he buckle down and complete his science project? Pat him on the back! Let him know how proud you are. Whenever possible, choose praise over criticism.
- **Explore his talents.** Is your child good at playing the piano? Does he throw a wicked fastball? Encourage him to find something outside of school that he enjoys doing. It may recharge his batteries.
- **Emphasize effort.** Remind your child that hard work and dedication mean a lot. Being smart is great, but working hard is just as admirable. If he believes this, he may be less intimidated by tough schoolwork.
- **Set goals.** But be realistic. If you know your child’s not a straight-A student, don’t get angry when he doesn’t bring home all A’s. Set expectations, but make sure they’re reasonable.

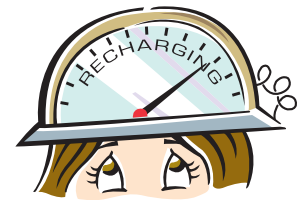
Source: “School Performance,” KeepKidsHealthy.com, [www.keepkidshealthy.com/schoolage/schoolperformance.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/schoolage/schoolperformance.html).



## Balance discipline with reassurance

Your youngster knows why she’s being disciplined, right? Don’t be so sure. What seems like crystal-clear misbehavior to you may be less obvious to her. So explain what’s happening. “You’re going to time-out because you lied about finishing your homework.” Once the punishment has ended, reassure her that you’re still on her side. “I don’t like what you did, but I still love you.”

Source: “Positive Discipline: Explain, Then Reassure,” Lucas County Children Services, Lucas County, Ohio, [www.co.lucas.oh.us/LCCS/Discipline.asp#spanking](http://www.co.lucas.oh.us/LCCS/Discipline.asp#spanking).



## Breathers can lead to better parenting

Part of being a good parent is setting—and enforcing—limits for your child. But doing so can be challenging and sometimes thoroughly exhausting. So remember to be good to yourself. Take time to do the things you enjoy. Explore a hobby. Talk to friends. Allow yourself to recharge. You’ll be better able to discipline your child fairly and with love—and send him off to school ready to learn.

Source: Dr. John Sharry, “Being Good to Yourself as a Parent,” Vhi Healthcare, [www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-371.jsp#5](http://www.vhi.ie/hfiles/hf-371.jsp#5).

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