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10 Great Ways to Teach Children Responsibility

One of a series of Parent Guides from



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Give your child responsibility

One of the best ways to help children learn to be responsible is to give them responsibilities of their own. For example:

- **Create a chore list.** Assign age-appropriate tasks that your child can do herself. Add responsibilities as he becomes more mature.
- **Involve your child in the process.** Let her choose some of the jobs she would like to do.
- **Keep track of your own responsibilities** with a “to-do” list and encourage your child to make a list of her own as well.
- **Make time to help your child** learn to take responsibility. Don’t rush through explanations. Make sure she understands what she is supposed to do. Break new chores into smaller steps while she learns how to do the entire task.
- **Don’t re-do her work for her.** If she hasn’t done something correctly, show her how to do it again. Then, let her do it—by herself.
- **Allow your child to take some risks.** Don’t automatically assume that she can’t do something.
- **Be prepared for mistakes.** Talk about what went wrong and how your child can learn from the experience.
- **Praise your child when she demonstrates responsibility.** On the other hand, don’t nag or rescue her when she doesn’t. Let her learn what happens when she fails to complete school assignments, do her chores or honor her commitments.
- **Be patient.** According to research, it takes 21 repetitions for an action to become a habit.

Teach your child about choices ... and consequences

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A big part of learning to be responsible involves learning to make good choices. And that takes practice. You can help your child learn about responsible decision-making by presenting him with plenty of opportunities to practice making acceptable choices. Even the youngest child can decide which shirt to wear, or whether he wants tomato or chicken soup for lunch, for example. Older children can decide which sport or other after-school activity they want to take part in, or whether they will do their homework before or after dinner.

It’s also important to help children understand that the choices they make—both good choices and bad choices—have consequences.

Talk with your child about how all choices have consequences. For example:

- **I chose to wait** until the last minute to do my research project. The result was that I did a poor job and got a low grade.
- **I chose to review** my vocabulary words for fifteen minutes a day this week. The result was that I got an A on my vocabulary quiz.

Use examples from your life in the discussion, too. For example, “I chose to sleep in today. The result was that I arrived to work late and felt rushed all morning.” Or, “I chose to pay my credit card bill on time. The result was that I didn’t have to pay an additional interest charge.”

This kind of discussion can help your child understand that all of us make choices every day, and that we must accept responsibility for the choices we make.

Other Parent Guides Available From The Parent Institute®

Educators,

Like the other 24 titles, this Parent Guide is a concise summary of the latest and best information on this topic as you help parents help their children to succeed in school and life. The topics were chosen based on the most frequently requested learning topics from educators and parents. Formatted for the busy parent in mind, they are full of no-nonsense, easy-to-implement, practical ideas that have been proven to work. The complete list of titles is below:

10 Great Ways to Teach Children Responsibility
25 Ways You Can Put the Power of Routines to Work for You and Your Child
52 Great Ways Families Can Spend Time Together
Developmental Milestones for Preschool Children—Is My Child on Track?
Preparing Your Child for Reading Success—Birth to Age Five
How to Choose the Best Preschool or Day Care for Your Child
Common Discipline Problems of Preschoolers and How to Solve Them
37 Experiences Every Child Should Have Before Starting School
Getting Your Child Ready for Kindergarten
The Road to Reading Success—Elementary School Years
Common Discipline Problems of Elementary Schoolers and How to Solve Them
31 Alternatives to TV and Video Games for Your Elementary School Child
Give Your Child the Edge: 10 Teachers' Learning Secrets Parents Can Use
How to Help Children Do Their Best on Tests
Helping Children Get Organized for Homework and Schoolwork
Help Your Child Develop Good Learning Styles
How to Instill the Character Traits of Success in Your Child
Seven Proven Ways to Motivate Children to Do Better in School
Help Your Child Deal With Bullies and Bullying
Help Your Child Deal With Peer Pressure
How to Help Your Struggling Student
Common Discipline Problems of Teenagers and How to Solve Them
What to Do If Your Child Has ADD/ADHD
Common Discipline Problems of Middle School Children and How to Solve Them
Making a Smooth Transition to Middle School

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