

Activities for good manners

Communication is an important element in helping your child to grow up to be kind, caring, polite and respectful. Here are some tips for how to talk to your child to help them develop good manners.

Teach them early

How early? Try infancy! From the beginning, communicate with your baby by a soft word and a gentle touch. When your nine-month-old grabs a handful of your hair and pulls hard, don't yell. Unfurl her fist and tell her to 'be gentle'. She learns to be gentle from your example long before she understands the word.

Modelling manners

Between the ages of two and four, what children hear, they say. Let your child hear you say 'please', 'thank you', 'excuse me' and 'you're welcome' often. Though they don't yet understand the meaning of polite words, toddlers conclude that 'please' is how you ask for things and 'thank you' is how you end an interaction. Plant these social niceties into their vocabulary early so they become a part of their developing speech.

Address by name

Use the name of your child when requesting something from them, such as: 'Harry, will you please help me with the dishes?' Your children pick up on this and address you by: 'Mum, may I...?' or 'Dad, would you...?' Even though they might not always get what they want, you can let them know you appreciate their politeness.

Teach respect

Some parents teach their children to address adults as Mr, Mrs, Ms or Miss. Some address their parents' friends by their first names while others use 'aunt' or 'uncle'. Whatever is done in your family, teach your child what is expected of her in different situations. When you don't know a person's name, use 'excuse me'. And if the person has a title, such as doctor or reverend, use it. Respectful listening is another skill that's important. Remind your child not to interrupt and to wait for an appropriate time to add their comments.

When your child approaches you to talk, turn away from what you're doing, look at them and listen with interest. Showing your child respect will help them learn respect for others.

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