

MANNERS



Photo by Howard G. Buffett

Manners help make people likable. We need manners throughout our life in order to fit into a group.

Children begin learning about manners at an early age. One of the teaching opportunities for manners is during mealtime. Toddlers explore all the "rules" of eating in search of limits and the acceptable mealtime behavior. By the age of four or five, children have a strong desire to imitate the actions of those around them. However, if told to "do this" or "don't do that," most preschoolers will rebel. Modeling becomes your best teaching tool!

Teaching your children manners takes time, patience and persistence. On a daily basis, you will need to explain to your kids what to do, when to do it and why, and then reinforce and model polite behavior. Kids like to do the right thing, and if you remind them quietly and privately, they appreciate it. The eventual goal is for manners to become automatic behavior.

Your child may feel excess pressure to learn good manners and may react with conscious rudeness. This reaction indicates that your child knows what she should do, but feels more pressure than she can handle and reacts with behavior and language that are sure to get a response.

Swearing or trying out "dirty" words is a rebellious behavior that usually gets a response from adults. This behavior is normal for four-to-six-year-olds. In his book, Touchpoints, Dr. Brazelton discusses this issue.

"It (swearing) persists solely because parents or other adults overreact. Negative reinforcement is the best approach – no response at all."

~ Dr. T. Berry Brazelton,
Touchpoints

Being likable is an asset to anyone. A foundational set of manners will enhance and encourage relationships with many people in your child's future.

MANNERS TO LIVE BY

A kids' guide to basic social graces.

When people come to visit, invite them in, offer them a seat and treat them courteously.

If someone sends you a present, express your thanks in a call or a note.

WHAT TO SAY:

"Please" when you ask people to help you or give you something.

"Thank you" to people after they have helped you or given you something.

"Excuse me" or *"Pardon me"* when you interrupt, burp or accidentally bump into someone.

"I'm sorry" when you do something that hurts or bothers someone.

"Hello" or *"How do you do?"* when greeting people. When parting company say *"Good-bye. It was really nice to meet you."*

WHAT TO DO:

Keep clean and properly dressed.

Pick up after yourself.

Listen when others speak to you.

Don't interrupt.

Take turns.

Don't swear.

Address adults by their last names unless they invite you to call them by their first names.

When you cough, cover your mouth.

ON SPECIFIC OCCASIONS:

When eating, keep your elbows off the table, put your napkin on your lap, chew with your mouth closed, don't tip back in your chair, don't complain about the food, ask to be excused and help with the dishes.

During a performance, be quiet. Afterward, clap as a gesture of appreciation.

When calling someone on the phone, say *"Hello. This is _____ . May I please speak with _____ ?"* When answering the phone, say *"Hello. May I ask who's calling?"*