

## How can I start teaching my child manners?

By Susanne Ayers Denham, Developmental Psychologist

Starting small can yield big results later on. Follow the steps below and eventually your child is likely to use good manners consistently.

**First, stick with the basics.** It takes time for children to learn to say "please" and "thank you". Encourage your child to say these words as a first step toward politeness and move on from there.

**Second, practice what you preach.** As you probably know by now, kids are *always* watching, listening, and learning from us - especially when we least expect it. The best way to encourage your child to behave nicely is to model good manners yourself. Say "please" and "thank you," hold doors for others, refrain from interrupting, and exhibit whatever other behaviors you'd like your child to emulate.

**Third, accentuate the positive.** Rather than scolding when your child forgets her manners, pour on the praise when she's behaving appropriately. Tell her that she seems so grown up when she says "please" and "thank you," and that people appreciate it. While it's disappointing when our kids are rude to others, blowing up about it could cause your child to resist your efforts to teach considerate behavior. You want your children to exert their independence by showing off good manners - not by refusing to use them.

Finally, be consistent. As soon as your child is usually saying "please" and "thank you" at home, make that your expectation in public, too. Kids like consistency, and a rule that applies only to certain situations will be confusing and become difficult to enforce.

### **Baby (0-1 Years)-What Manners to Teach Them:**

**Politeness in speech:** Modulate your tone when you speak to your baby and use social niceties such as "please" and "thank you" when speaking directly to them or in conversations in their presence. Your example will guide them as they learn to speak.

**Nice Touch:** Gently direct your baby on how to treat parents, siblings and pets. Teach baby not to grab at someone's face or hair by physically moving their hand and demonstrating a soft stroke on a dog's back or by rubbing their fingers across your hair. This will teach them limits and introduce the concept of cause and effect in relation to their actions.

**Respect for Others:** Practice well-mannered activities in front of your baby, such as holding the door for someone, saying "excuse me" when you bump into them, or picking something up after you drop it. Give commentary to your baby on what you just did and why. "They register this in their minds," says Healy. "Babies can learn what is appropriate. When the doorbell rings, it is time to go to the door. The subtle cues of listening, watching and acting are being put together piece by piece by young children and babies." (...continue on page 2)

Thank  
You

Good Manners  
*Never*  
Go Out of Style



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## Toddler (Age 2-3 years):

As toddlers' grasp on language develops and they begin to move around more, you can begin to practice good manners with them. But during these years, parents must realize that manners are taught, not inherent, and it will take time for the lessons to become ingrained. So repeat, repeat, repeat!

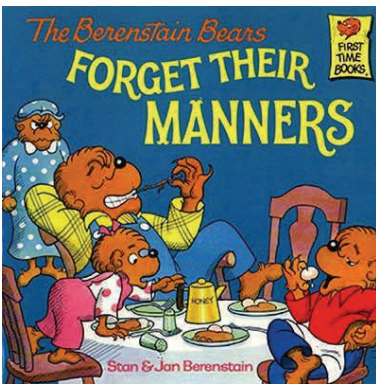
"At this age, play is still not always interactive, but parents can start to remind children to respect others' space, not grab, not hit. Essentially, this is the time of 'play nice,'" says Dr. Jennifer Hartstein, a child psychologist from Manhattan. And, she stresses, "Parents need to be hands-on during this time, as these concepts are still difficult to understand."

### What Manners to Teach Them:

**Sharing:** Hartstein recommends saying to children, "Be gentle" and "we have to share," while taking away the fought-over toy.

**Politeness:** Practice saying "please" and "thank you" often — but expect to say it a lot before they get it.

**Cleanliness:** "If they don't want to clean up, the tendency is to do it for them," Hartstein says. "But they have to be encouraged to help, and another activity should not be started until the first one is cleaned up." excerpts taken from: <http://www.babble.com/kid/teaching-manners-for-kids-politeness/>

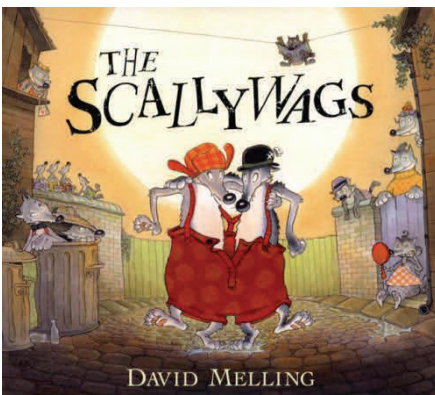
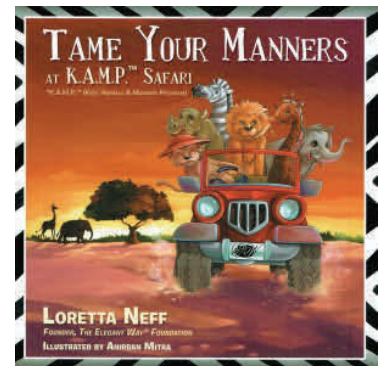


## Children's Books about Good Manners

"When Mama Bear's efforts to improve her family's manners are unsuccessful, she devises a Politeness Plan--a chart listing a chore as a penalty for each act of rudeness. Basic etiquette is presented in a practical way."



*Tame Your Manners* makes manners fun, meaningful, and most importantly, memorable. Any adult or child who reads this book will delight in the clever illustrations and correlations of animal characteristics to the manners advice. Phrases like "lions don't need to roar," "don't be a whino rhino," and "stand tall like a giraffe" will be forever fixed in a reader's mind.



The Scallywags are a pack of wolves. When they aren't being lazy and shiftless, they spend the day jumping around and clowning around and getting into all kinds of mischief. They make a lot of noise and throw their food around and make general nuisances of themselves. They annoy all the other animals and show the entire world that they simply don't know how to behave. But after one particularly rowdy episode, the Scallywags learn that if being rowdy means losing your friends, maybe it's time to start practicing some manners. Very funny color illustrations on every page.

# Beyond Manners: Teaching Children Respect

Written by: Karen Jacobson

Back talk, lack of manners, name calling, rude behavior and being demanding are commonplace. Teaching children respect and manners is essential; learning to live and behave respectfully translates into self-respect, the building block of self-esteem.

**Give respect:** To receive respect *from* children, parents must respect them. Children learn to treat themselves and others from how they are treated.

**Model respect and manners:** Children watch and listen to their parents. Someone cuts you off while driving, you are running late, or someone insults you. How do you handle your anger, frustration and stress?

**Seek to understand:** Children behave disrespectfully when they are angry or frustrated, need attention or a sense of control, or have been hurt and want to hurt back.

**Remain calm:** Reacting harshly typically causes your child to feel justified in acting disrespectfully and escalates emotions.

## **Set limits:**

Use three steps to set limits:

1. Empathize
2. State the limit
3. Offer two acceptable choices or ask for a better choice ("I know you were frustrated. Yelling and calling names is not okay. Are you ready to talk to me respectfully or do you need some time to yourself to calm down?")



\* *Send a message with your actions (no words).* When your child acts disrespectfully at the table, quietly remove his plate. The message: when people act inappropriately, the meal is over. When your child complains, empathize and respond, "I know, it's sad. I will make a great breakfast tomorrow."

\* *Talk about it later.* Disrespectful behavior can be difficult to address if there is emotion, anger and defensiveness. Saying, "Your behavior is unacceptable, we will talk about this later" gives parents time to calm down and determine how to handle the situation. Time also allows children to calm down and think about what happened.

**Pick battles:** Often what parents interpret as disrespectful is just a child venting feelings.

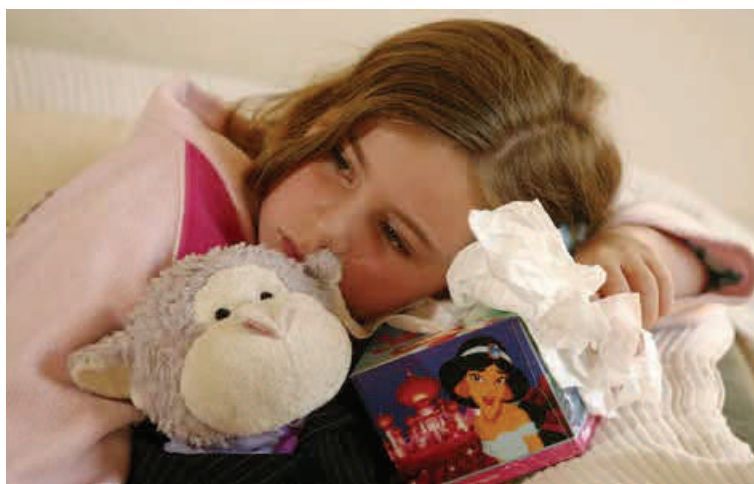


## AVOIDING THE FLU

Whether or not you got a flu shot, since it isn't 100% effective, you should follow these steps to help prevent you and your family from getting sick with the flu:

- **Wash your hands often.** Remember that one of the most common ways people catch colds and the flu is by rubbing their nose or their eyes after their hands have been contaminated with a virus.
- Teach your children '**cough etiquette**', which the American Academy of Pediatrics describes as teaching children to turn their heads and cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue or the inside of their elbow if they don't have a tissue, instead of simply coughing or sneezing onto their hands, which will then spread their germs onto everything they touch.
- Routinely clean, with soap and water, and **disinfect** surfaces, toys, and objects that younger children may put in their mouths. It may also help to wipe surfaces with paper towels that can be thrown away or cloth towels that can be washed afterwards.
- Avoid close contact with people when you are sick. It isn't really possible to completely avoid people who are sick, so it is likely better if you just avoid exposing other people to your germs when you or your kids are sick. So don't go to school, daycare, work, etc., if you are sick with the flu.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with a lot of people for your younger children. It isn't easy to always tell when people are sick and some people are contagious even before they start to have symptoms, so don't expose your younger kids to large crowds of people if you don't have to. Take a reusable water bottle to school instead of using the school water fountain, which may become contaminated with germs, especially during cold and flu season.

Excerpts taken from: [http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/commoninfections/a/avoiding\\_flu.htm](http://pediatrics.about.com/cs/commoninfections/a/avoiding_flu.htm)



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