

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Clintonville Academy
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Parents Guiding Students for School Success

Focus on reasonable expectations, not wishful thinking

When parents hold high expectations for their children's behavior and academic achievement, their children often live up to those expectations. However, expectations must be reasonable.

You might wish that your shy child were more outgoing, for example, or that your struggling reader would delve into Shakespeare this summer. But translating those wishes into expectations is probably not realistic.

To set fair and reasonable expectations:

- **Consider your child's nature.** Know what he's capable of and what goals make sense for him.
- **Realize that every child learns differently.** What helps one child learn math may not be the same learning method that works for your child.
- **Consider siblings individually** when setting expectations. "Your sister gets straight A's. Why can't you?" is neither fair nor reasonable.
- **Avoid pushing your child too far**, even if you think he is "gifted." Set expectations that are not only attainable, but also enjoyable.
- **Find ways to encourage success** that allow your child to be himself.

Source: K.K. Abrams, Ph.D., "Parenting with Confidence: Nurturing Your Child's Nature," *Washington Parent*.



'All you need is love'

Remember the popular old song, "All You Need is Love"? This idea applies perfectly to discipline.

Even if you are furious with your child (especially when you are, in fact), remind yourself how much you love her. Then focus on your child's behavior rather than on her.

Choose a response that is designed to help her improve her behavior, rather than to make her feel bad. "Please stack those books gently," for example, is much more effective than "You're always so careless with everything!"

Love works!



Help your child build positive traits

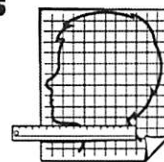
Everyone talks about developing "character" in children. But what does that mean? What constitutes a strong, positive character?

Some elements include:

- **Compassion.**
- **Honesty.**
- **Fairness.**
- **Self-discipline.**
- **Respect for others.**
- **Responsibility.**
- **Self-respect.**

Add some of your own values to the list and then help your child adopt the qualities and character traits that will shape his thoughts and actions in a positive way!

Source: "What Does 'Strong Character' Mean?—Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen," U.S. Department of Education.



Summer is almost here—*almost*.



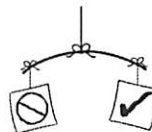
This means that *school is still in session!*

Before your child falls too far into "vacation mode," have a serious discussion with her. Let her know that you expect her to continue to follow school rules, take her homework seriously, listen in class and treat her teacher and classmates with respect.

By finishing strong in the spring, she'll be more likely to start strong next fall.

Balance discipline with reassurance

Your child understands 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 take the time to explain what's happening. "You've lost your TV privileges this weekend because you lied about having finished your homework."

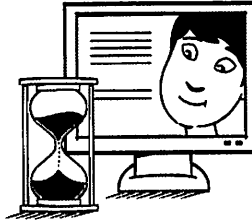
Once the punishment has ended, reassure her that you're still on her side. "I don't like what you did, but I will always love you!"

Where do you draw the line on limits?

When it comes to setting limits, parents often struggle with knowing where to draw the line. Some parents become too flexible, while others become too tough. Meanwhile, kids get confused about how to behave.

To set reasonable limits, use these guidelines:

- **Consider** your child's age and maturity.
- **Establish** a few essential rules about things like homework, screen time and social privileges. Explain the limits (and consequences) clearly.
- **Prepare** for potential problems. Use a timer, for example, to limit technology time. Or agree on a way to signal an upcoming curfew.
- **Change** limits as your child matures. Consider your child's input. He will be more likely to stay within bounds if he has a say in the process.



Source: A. Scheiner, "Balancing Freedom and Responsibility," *Washington Parent*.

Questions & Answers

Q: Now that summer is nearly here, I'd like to give everyone a break from the house rules. How can I take the pressure off my children and let them have some fun without their good behavior suffering?

A: It may be time to reevaluate your view of discipline. Remember, setting and enforcing rules isn't about preventing children from having fun—it's about teaching them to behave appropriately and respect limits. Because effective discipline is so critical to their overall well-being, it's important that you not throw your rules out the window just because the kids are on break from school.

Instead, why not modify some of your house rules to make them more compatible with the family's summer schedule? Although the essential rules (for example, no hitting, no cursing) should always apply, here are two areas that can probably withstand a little summertime tweaking:

- **Bedtime.** You shouldn't do away with a set bedtime, but it's okay to push it back a little. Go ahead and give the kids an extra half-hour or 45 minutes, but be consistent about enforcing it. That way, they'll be prepared for the regular school-year bedtime next fall.
- **Chores.** Having your children do most of their chores on the weekend makes sense during the school year, but not necessarily over summer break. If they balk at the idea of a Saturday spent mopping and dusting, let them complete their tasks throughout the week. Be sure to draw up a chore chart, though, to prevent misunderstandings and meltdowns.



Nurture—don't lecture

Working together on a project this summer can be a great way for you and your child to learn more about each other.

But remember, whether you're working in the kitchen or in the workshop, don't turn everything into a lecture. Let your child do things his way and learn from his mistakes.

Your child doesn't want to feel like he's always in class. Sometimes, it's fun to putter around and just be together.

Is it just a bad mood—or depression?

Your child has been "down in the dumps" lately, and your best efforts at cheering her up aren't working.



While occasional sadness or melancholy can be normal in children, don't wait for your child to "snap out of it" if the situation lingers. It's time to contact a health professional if her mood:

- **Persists** for several weeks.
- **Affects** her schoolwork.
- **Interferes** with sleep.
- **Causes** her to shun family and friends.

Watch for increased signs of hopelessness. Above all, make sure your child knows that you're there to help. Tell her again and again.

Source: "Understanding Depression," Kids!Health, http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/understanding_depression.html.

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Publisher: Phillip Wherry

Editor: Erika Beasley

Illustrations: Maher & Mignella, Cherry Hill, NJ.

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P.O. Box 7474, Fairfax Station, VA 22039-7474

1-800-756-5525

www.parent-institute.com • ISSN 1541-437X