



Having Guests and Visiting Others

Being a courteous host or a considerate guest are skills that take time to learn and refine. Below are some strategies to prepare children for having visitors and being a guest.

1. Set Expectations: Whether children are going to another person's house or people are coming to their house, let them know what is going to happen. If children are unfamiliar with whom they will be seeing, show them pictures or talk about the different people. Set expectations for behavior prior to the event by discussing activities that may be hard for them. For example, if it is someone else's birthday let them know the other person gets to blow out the candles and open the gifts.

2. Give Children Responsibility: Have children carry gifts or side dishes when visiting others. If people are visiting you, ask the child to be the official greeter or coat person. Since children are excited at the start of an event, a task early on can channel their energy into something productive.

3. Set Limits: Children often are out of sight at events. Set limits and monitor their activity. Let children know they can have one soda or eat one hot dog. Adhere to initial limits and praise children for following the rules.

4. Encourage Manners: Children are able to greet and say good-bye to others at a young age. Older children can hold doors and demonstrate more advanced manners. Teach them polite words and helpful actions by modeling the behavior and praising children when they demonstrate it. Since other people may serve different foods or have different routines, remind children to try foods, use polite words, and respond to differences with respect.



From: *Please, Thank You, and Excuse Me*

5. Have Child Friendly Activities: Some events are planned well for adults but lack child centered activities. Prepare for visits by having a variety of activities children enjoy. Bring movies, board games, and outdoor equipment when visiting others. If children are in your home, have activities and games readily available. Most hosts welcome additional activities for children, but check with them in case they have other things planned. Address this by saying, "John loves to play soccer so I brought a ball for him to share with the other kids. Is it okay if I go and get it?"

6. Prepare for Differences in Rules and Expectations: Schedules and rules may change when visiting other people's homes. For some children this can be very confusing. Let children know the rules are changed just for that night. For example, tell the child, "Usually you go to bed at 8:00, but this is a special occasion. Tonight you can go to bed at 9:30 since your grandparents are here."

7. Prepare Children for the End of the Event: Give children notice when you or visitors will be leaving and give them specific times to clearly prepare them for the end of the event. For example, "The birthday party ends at 3:00. You have to say good-bye to your friends at 3:00."

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