



Teaching Children Manners

Manners encompass appropriate words and behaviors for treating other people with respect. They can be demonstrated in virtually any setting and should be used with everyone. Basic manners can be taught at a very young age and expanded upon as children mature. This article includes a variety of ideas for teaching manners. These ideas can be adapted to fit a child's age and ability levels and can be used at home, school, or in the community.

1. Be a Role Model – Children model adult behavior. Use please, thank you, and excuse me when speaking with children and adults. Model manners by offering to help other people, holding the door, and picking up dropped items. Teach children to respect all people by treating everyone including neighbors, waitresses, and co-workers with respect. Explain your actions so children learn from you. For example, let children know it is polite to give your seat to an elderly person or someone who needs additional assistance on a crowded bus.

2. Set Expectations – When children are prepared for events they are more likely to respond appropriately. Discuss manners before situations arise. For example, before a birthday party tell the child to thank the host. For unexpected situations teach children appropriate behavior during the event. For example, when a child sneezes, remind them to cover their mouth to prevent germs from spreading. When children forget their manners, politely remind them. It is important to do this in a respectful way that does not embarrass them.



From the story, *Sharing*

3. Role Play – Role play new situations or recent experiences to set expectations or review behavior. Role play is a fun way to prepare children for a variety of situations and settings. Include different opportunities for using manners such as a peer or adult falling down, dropping an item, having their hands full, or needing assistance with the door. If a child forgets to use their manners in a specific situation, reenact the scene. Discuss how people feel when situations are handled with and without manners.

4. Be Consistent – Mixed messages about settings and people can be confusing. Remind children to use polite words consistently and to treat all people with respect. Children are less likely to forget to be polite if their manners are repeatedly and consistently practiced.

5. Use Visuals – Have posters showing sharing, turn taking, or holding doors for other people in the classroom and throughout the school. Discuss the posters and use them as reminders for treating other people with respect. Children can create posters as an art activity. They can draw scenes depicting manners or create collages of photographs with people sharing and helping each other as a fun art activity and visual reminder.

6. Praise Children - When children use manners be sure to praise them. Be clear about what they did and why it was good. For example, "Sean, I like how you held the door for Mr. James. His hands were full and you made it much easier for him to enter the classroom."

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