



## THE COUNSELOR'S CORNER



### Character Trait- RESPONSIBILITY

#### Teaching Responsibility

Help your child learn to take responsibility for their actions with these helpful ideas from the pros. Plus: What you need to know about helping your child become socially responsible, too.

Grade-schoolers are quite competent at handling various responsibilities, and they're developing a sense of how some chores, like picking up litter in the park, can benefit an entire community. Remember, though, that most kids don't have much internal motivation to be responsible, so yours may still need occasional reminders. At this stage, it's best not to overload your youngster with lots of tasks. Instead, ask him to perform fewer chores – but then make sure he follows through and does them.

[https://www.babycenter.com/0\\_the-responsible-child-how-to-teach-responsibility-ages-6-to\\_67945.bc](https://www.babycenter.com/0_the-responsible-child-how-to-teach-responsibility-ages-6-to_67945.bc)



#### What you can do

**Set a good example.** One of the best (and hardest) ways to engender responsible behavior is to be a good role model with your own possessions – put your car keys where they belong instead of on the dining room table, and tidy up your stack of magazines instead of leaving them all over the couch.

**Choose age-appropriate tasks.** Kids this age should be handling at least some tasks that require self-reliance and dependability. Your grade-schooler can make his bed every morning, load the dishwasher, or sweep up the kitchen floor.

**Teach first things first.** Your youngster knows by now that work comes before play, but you still need to reinforce this basic rule. "I want to go swimming too," you can tell him. "But remember, first we need to clean up after lunch." Be friendly and matter of fact about it, and admit that you, too, prefer the fun – then he knows that you're not being bossy, but are simply expecting him to behave responsibly.

**Expect ups and downs.** "Kids are going to mess up. That's part of being a kid," says Coleman. "But you can usually get more compliance when they realize there's a pattern."

**Phrase things in a positive way.** Jerry Wyckoff, a family psychologist and the coauthor of *Twenty Teachable Virtues*, suggests using what he calls "Grandma's rule" to encourage responsible behavior. try not to express anger or disappointment if your grade-schooler's having an off day. Just say to him calmly, "Remember, you always feed the dog right before we set the table."

# How to Teach Kids to Accept Responsibility for Their Actions

Encourage your kid to stop the blame game and start accepting responsibility.

By Tamekia Reece from [Parents Magazine](#)

Your child is quick to fault others for ... well, everything. If he gets a bad mark in class, he says it's because a friend wouldn't stop talking to him. And when you see his muddy shoe prints all over the carpet, he claims they're the dog's! "Kids this age don't understand that everybody makes mistakes," says Kate Roberts, Ph.D., a Boston-area psychologist. "Blaming somebody is simply their way to avoid disapproval and negative consequences." These smart tips will help your kid go from "It wasn't me!" to learning to be accountable for his actions.

## Connect the Dots

Help your child make the link between what he does and what happens by pointing out real-life examples, suggests Rachel Robertson, director of [education](#) and development at Bright Horizons Family Solutions in Watertown, Massachusetts. For instance, you could say, "Because you studied hard, you got an A on your spelling test" or "Since you jumped in a puddle, your shoes are soggy." You can ask him to think of a cause or an effect for certain situations. One could be, "Mom overslept on Tuesday," and he must come up with a possible consequence. Expect some wacky responses ("Mom overslept, so she had to go to work in her pajamas!"), but just roll with it. The more experience he gets identifying causes and effects, the easier it will be for him to work through this inner dialogue before and after his own actions.

## Make Honesty Easy

If you want your child to come to you with the truth (or admit to it when asked), try to keep your cool when expressing your dissatisfaction about her poor behavior, suggests Philip Dembo, Ph.D., author of *The Real Purpose of Parenting: The Book You Wish Your Parents Read*. Being calm and approachable makes it easier -- and more likely -- that she'll fess up in the future. Let her know everyone makes mistakes and what matters most is that she's truthful, learns from the situation, and tries to right her wrongs. Then, discuss what she could have done differently, how she can make it better, and any consequences. Don't forget to praise her honesty if she owned up to her actions.

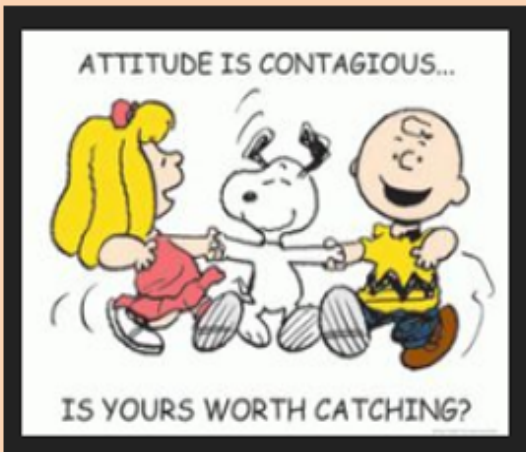
## Stick to the Rules

Sure, we all allow some things to slide on occasion. But if you often let your child's adorable face, charming ways, or pitiful pleading persuade you not to enforce punishment, your kid learns that he doesn't have to take the rules seriously and can convince you to go easy on him. To be accountable, he needs to learn to accept the consequences of his words, actions, and decisions, and the only way he'll do so is if you're consistent with rules, says Dr. Dembo.

## Keep Track of Progress

To help the lesson stick, turn it into a challenge. Tell your child that she'll begin the week with 5 points, and each time she makes an excuse or tries to place blame on others, she loses one. Use a chart on the fridge or a dry-erase board hung on her bedroom door to keep track. If she can make it through the week without getting to zero, reward her improved behavior with a trip to the park or an extra 30 minutes before bed one night. Though her points may dwindle at first, this chart will remind her to be conscious of what she does and says so she'll be less likely to pass the buck next time.

## Literature Connection - RESPONSIBILITY



The Gardener- Sarah Stewart  
Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express- Margaret Wetterer  
Arthur's Pet Business- Marc Brown  
Josephina February- Evaline Ness  
A Thousand Pails of Water- Ronald Roy  
A Special Trade- Sally Wittman  
Holes- Louis Sachar  
Charlotte's Web- E.B. White  
Wonder- R. J. Palacio