

Poor Choices Can Lead to Good Lessons

Children make choices every day. Sometimes they make the right choices; sometimes they make the wrong ones. They watch too much TV. They say or do something unkind. Or they tell a lie. But that doesn't mean all is lost.

Explain that everyone, including you, can make a wrong choice from time to time. Then teach your child to turn a poor choice into a positive experience by following these four simple steps:

- 1. Admit the mistake.** “Dad, I lied. I really do have homework tonight. I just didn't understand it.”
- 2. Accept the consequence.** “I know I have to do my homework, so I'll try my best. And I accept that I've lost video game privileges this week.”
- 3. Apologize.** “I'm sorry, Dad. I'll ask the teacher for help tomorrow. And I won't lie about it again.”
- 4. Learn from the choice.** “Doing my homework would have been a lot easier than lying about it. When I do my assignment, my teacher will know that I'm responsible and want to learn.”



Effective Consequences Influence Achievement

Sometimes the best way to discipline is to do very little. Let natural consequences be the teacher. Suppose your child forgets to study for a quiz. He is devastated by the low grade. You might simply say, “This really upset you. Let’s talk about how to keep it from happening again.”

At times, you have to impose a logical consequence. Knowing when and how to give a consequence can be the key to success. Follow these three R’s to be sure your consequences are:

1. Related. The consequence should be related to the “crime.” If your child decided to watch TV instead of working on his history report—and now it’s late—no TV for one week might be a related consequence.



- 2. Reasonable.** If you tell him he’s “never going to watch TV again” because he messed up, you’re being unrealistic. Consequences must make sense in order to be effective.
- 3. Respectful.** “If you weren’t so lazy, I wouldn’t have to yell at you!” is hurtful. Instead, focus on the misbehavior and its consequences.

Communication Affects Behavior at Home and at School

It's simple: The way parents communicate with their children has a lot to do with how their children behave. Children need to hear that they're loved and capable. This translates to improved behavior at home—and at school.

Here are some simple reminders:

- ***Spend time with your child.*** Give him your full attention when he talks.
- ***Encourage your child to express his views.*** Listen openly without being critical. Let him know you value his opinion.
- ***Discuss school.*** Make sure your child knows how important it is. Show interest in his work.
- ***Avoid criticizing your child.*** Say, "I love you, but I don't love your behavior." If you're



angry, avoid talking about it until you regain your cool. Use a calm voice.

- ***Point out good behavior.*** "I'm proud of you for going over that chapter one more time. You will do so well on the test tomorrow!"

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Procrastination Can Rob Your Child of Success

When it's time for schoolwork, many kids put it off ... and put it off. Pretty soon, there isn't time to finish. That hurts learning and grades. To help your child avoid procrastination and develop important self-discipline skills, offer these tips:

- **Stick to a study routine.** It's best to work at the same time—and in the same place—each day. Set a daily alarm as a signal to get started.
 - **Avoid saying, "I don't know where to start."** Pick one class or one topic to begin with each day—perhaps even the toughest one—and dive in.
 - **Just get started.** If a task seems too difficult, try it for 10 minutes. That may not seem so bad and at least part of it will be done. (She may even continue to work past the initial 10 minutes!)
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- A cartoon illustration of a young girl with black hair in a ponytail, wearing a purple shirt with a blue bow. She is sitting at a desk with a stack of books (blue, white, and red), a yellow notepad, and a calculator. She has a thoughtful or slightly frustrated expression. Above her head is a speech bubble containing the text 'GUIDING IDEAS'.

- **Break large assignments into small parts.** It's tempting to procrastinate about sitting down to write a whole research paper. So set a deadline for each section. Making an outline is less intimidating than writing an entire paper at once.

Work Together to Promote School Safety

Nothing is more important to parents than their children's wellbeing. Schools go to great lengths to ensure the safety of their students and staff, but sometimes violence does occur and parents become frightened—and feel powerless.

Here are some important things you can do:

- *Ask your child questions* about how she feels—and listen to her answers. Are there places at school where your child doesn't feel safe?
- *Attend school meetings.* Learn about school rules. Ask what the school is doing to maintain a safe learning environment. Support your school's efforts to prevent violence.
- *Answer your child's questions.* Make sure she understands what the school is doing to ensure her safety.
- *Talk to your child and her friends.* Children often know before adults do about situations that could turn violent at school.
- *Join (or start) an anti-violence group.* When parents, schools and community leaders work together, they can make a huge difference.



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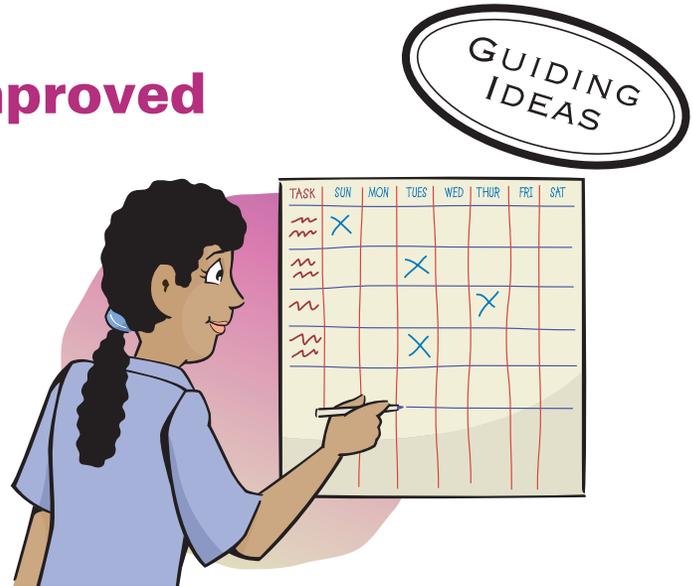
Organization Leads to Improved Performance at School

“A test? We have a test tomorrow?” “Where’s my math homework?” “I need poster board—tonight. Can you take me to the store?” Does this sound familiar? What happened to your organized child?

As your child moves up through the grades, she’ll be responsible for keeping track of more schedules, assignments and tests. It can be overwhelming, but her school performance depends on it. You can help by encouraging her to organize her:

- *Study spot*, stocked with pens, paper, folders, etc.
- *Assignments*, including weekly and daily tasks.
- *Calendar*, noting all due dates, tests and activities.

You’ll both be more relaxed without the constant worry of wondering where things are and when



they’re due. Your child won’t have to waste precious time scrambling to gather materials and make up missed assignments. Instead, she can get right to work and use that extra time for rest or play.