

# Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Savannah Lakes Elementary  
School Counselor - Bonnie George

Guiding Students for School Success

## Expect success at homework time

If you *expect* your child to complete homework, she's more likely to do so! Consider your child's responsibilities and skills. Then decide what's reasonable to expect. Here are some common homework expectations:

- **Bring it home.** Your child should have a system for remembering assignments. She might use a take-home folder, for example, or write assignments in a special notebook.
- **Study on weekdays.** It helps to pick a regular homework time and place. Once kids get in the habit of doing homework daily, they're less likely to avoid studying.
- **Turn it in.** Homework should get packed in the proper folder or notebook at night, and then put in the backpack, along with other important papers. This makes mornings much easier!
- **Ask questions.** Stay nearby while your child does homework. Encourage her to tell you if she needs help. Review assignments together to make sure your child understands them.
- **Learn from mistakes.** When the teacher returns homework, look it over together. What did your child do right? (Congratulate her!) What might she do differently next time?
- **Persevere.** Homework can be challenging. Compliment your child's efforts and let the teacher know if homework seems to take too long.



## Avoid using rewards to motivate your child

At one time or another, most parents use rewards to motivate their children. And there's no question that reward systems work.



But when the rewards stop, sometimes the good motivation stops, too. That's true whether it comes to behavior or schoolwork.

Researchers have found that when students are motivated by an inner reward, such as pride at getting all their math problems right, they retain what they have learned longer, and they earn higher grades.

Source: C. Brewster and J. Fager, "Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation" Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, [http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm\\_send/452](http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/452).

## Parenting affects boys, girls differently

An analysis of 69 studies shows that boys who lack parental comfort and support during stressful times are more likely to become:



- **Aggressive.**
- **Destructive.**
- **Disobedient.**

On the other hand, girls tend to turn feelings inward and become:

- **Depressed.**
- **Anxious.**
- **Socially withdrawn.**

So during stressful times, make an extra effort to check in with your child.

Source: R. Nixon, "Bad behavior linked to poor parenting," MSNBC.com, <http://tinyurl.com/3f6x5mm>.

Punishment rarely improves poor behavior in the long run. Because *punishment satisfies the punisher.*



If your child has a misstep, enforce a consequence instead.

If, for instance, she forgets to hand in her permission slip despite being reminded, let her miss the field trip. It's a penalty that relates directly to her actions. And it's more fitting than an angry, "You're grounded!"

Source: Dr. M. Marshall, *Discipline Without Stress, Punishments or Rewards*, Piper Press.

## Don't indulge a pouter

If your family exchanges gifts during the holiday season, how do you handle a child who pouts when he doesn't get every item on his list?



He *really* wants everything and you *really* don't want to disappoint him. You want him to be happy. What should you do?

Remember that you are the parent. And as a parent, it's not your job to fulfill your child's every demand. It's your job to raise him to be a decent, caring person—not someone who pouts to get his way!

## Turn reading into a happy habit

Reading should be a daily routine, but it shouldn't feel like a chore. To make reading fun, be creative. Try some of these ideas:

- **Read in new spots.** Let your child pick somewhere new—and silly—to read. She might read in the bathtub, for example, or bundled up in the snow.
- **Re-enact stories.** After reading an exciting book, have family members choose parts and act it out. Use costumes and props, too!
- **Have a pajama party.** Put on your PJs and gather books, pillows and blankets. Stay up a little later to read together.



Source: S. Frost, "Super Creative Family Reading Night Ideas-Fun!" ModernMom, [www.modernmom.com/article/super-creative-family-reading-night-ideas-fun](http://www.modernmom.com/article/super-creative-family-reading-night-ideas-fun).

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** We'll be staying with out-of-town relatives during the holidays this year. They're stricter with their child than I am with mine, and I'm worried about how he'll adapt. What should I do?

**A:** It's smart to start thinking about the upcoming "rule changes" now instead of waiting until you pull up to your relatives' driveway. But rather than worry about your stay, look at it as an opportunity for your child to learn respect.

After all, every time he obeys the new rules, he'll be showing that he respects his relatives and the regulations they've set (even if he doesn't particularly like or appreciate those regulations).

To prepare your child for the visit ahead of time, and hopefully avoid meltdowns or misunderstandings:

- **Know what to expect.** Well before you arrive, talk with your relatives about their daily routine. Is their child's bedtime written in stone? Is screen time monitored? The more you know in advance, the better.
- **Explain the rules in a positive way.** Talk to him about how your relatives' rules are different from yours, not worse. (Criticizing the rules may make it harder for your child to respect them.) "I know we sometimes eat in the family room at home, but Aunt Becky wants us to keep food in the kitchen. That way, nothing will get spilled on her new carpet."
- **Be realistic.** It's the holiday season, and your child is excited. Behavior-wise, he may slip up here or there. It's not the end of the world! Enjoy your family time.



## Are you dealing with a dawdler?

Your child took forever to get dressed and missed breakfast—and the school bus—again. Yelling is a bad idea (and it doesn't work), so what should you try next? A game.

Set a kitchen timer and say, "You've got 15 minutes. If you get ready before it beeps, we can all have breakfast together. Go!"

If he is successful, surprise him with his favorite breakfast. If he isn't, add two minutes tomorrow and try again.

Source: "Child Behavior: What Parents Can Do to Change Their Child's Behavior," FamilyDoctor.org, <http://tinyurl.com/43rk22f>.

## Make spelling colorful



It's homework time and your child is grumbling about practicing her spelling words. Here's a fun way you can help:

- **Let her type** them on the computer instead of having her write them in pencil.
- **Choose a large, fun font** and change the color to something splashy. Then, have her type out each word as you say it.

No computer? Have her use two colored markers—one color for vowels and another for consonants.

It might not make her suddenly love spelling. But it could help you avoid at least one homework-related headache!

Source: J.S. Schumm, Ph.D., *How to Help Your Child with Homework*, Free Spirit Publishing.

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