

Teaching Manners to Kids

It may seem like a "no-brainer" to teach your child please and thank you, but these and other simple courtesies seem to be going by the wayside. Teaching manners will not only help you have a happier home, it will help your child with making friendships, classroom behavior, and one day in the distant future manners will help your child in the work place as well. We have put together some of the most common rules for good manners and our best tips to get your child to actually use them.

1. Please and Thank You

Using please and thank you is by far the most important rule of etiquette you can ever teach your child. Starting before your child can talk she should hear these words often. As she begins to talk and uses nonverbal cues and babbles to request her needs, teach her please and thank you. When she hands a cup to signal her need for a drink, teach her "milk please", "juice please", "drink please" and reinforce "thank you" once you have given it to her. As she grows into toddlerhood insist on these magic words with her playmates. Use please and thank you yourself with friends, family, out on the town shopping, and use it often. If you set a good example, your child will follow.

2. Excuse me

Another set of magic words that should be taught from a young age is 'excuse me'. Excuse me should be used if you bump into somebody, if you need to interrupt a conversation for something important, when leaving the table, and of course the unfortunate incidence of any accidental belching or passing of gas.

3. Interrupting

This is a really tough one for kids (and even some adults). When children have something to say, their immediate instinct is to just blurt it out. Teaching your child not to interrupt may take lots of practice and patience. Teach your child polite ways of getting your attention. In school, your child will be taught to raise her hand and wait for the teacher to call on her. A similar approach can be used at home. Teach your child to signal you when she has something important to say that needs to be asked or said and teach her to wait for you to respond. Try not to make her wait more than a few minutes to respond. A child should be taught not to interrupt, but a parent must also make a conscientious effort not to ignore her child. Often a child will interrupt when she is expected to entertain herself for an unreasonable amount of time. This is just not possible for small children. Discuss with your child when interruptions are important



and when they can wait. Roll play and practice at home appropriate and needed interruptions and ones that are annoyances. Praise your child when she does not interrupt.

4. Table Manners

Table manners are perhaps the most difficult challenge for parents. Eating at the table is a very social experience for your child and one of the more important ways to practice up on their social etiquette.

Here are some simple table etiquette rules:

- a. Wait until everyone is served before eating.
- b. Don't slurp, keep your mouth closed when you chew your food, and don't talk with your mouth full.
- c. Place your napkin on your lap and use it as needed.
- d. Don't reach over other's plates. Instead, ask for food to be passed to you.
- e. Eat with your fork and spoon. This is probably a given, but small children love to eat with their fingers even when they are old enough to use utensils correctly.
- f. Don't ask for seconds until everyone else has eaten (if you ask at all).
- g. Don't put your elbows on the table. The easiest way to teach table manners is to eat with your family at the table and practice using them regularly. If your child usually eats her meals in front of the television or on the go, she will not have as many opportunities to master table manners as she would if she ate her meals at the table often. Teach your children that using proper table manners is one way you can show people you care about them. You care enough about them to be polite and well mannered throughout your meal.

5. Phone etiquette

If children are going to answer the phone, they need to know how to answer it properly. In the work place, proper phone etiquette is a must and sadly, many adults do not practice good phone manners. Use greetings such as "Hello, may I ask who's calling?" instead of answering "Who is it?". Teach them to let the caller know when they are setting the phone down or when they will be handing the phone to another person. Finally, teach them to say goodbye and wait for the other party to acknowledge them before hanging up the phone.