

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Catholic School Office
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Guiding Students for School Success

Lessons about competition and fairness go hand in hand

Kids often point out that life “isn’t fair.” Sometimes they take this personally and get quite competitive. To help your child understand fairness:

- **Review your family’s values** and how they relate to fairness. Being “fair” isn’t always the same as being “equal.” And teach your child that cheating is never okay.
- **Focus on personal success.** If your child runs his fastest in a race, but loses, it might *feel* unfair. If his goal was to do his best, though, he’s a winner.
- **Avoid buying things to “measure up”** or make things “even.” The best purchases are truly needed or wanted. Encourage your child to help save for special items.
- **Look for examples of fairness and unfairness.** They’re easy to find in sports—and there’s even a referee to help.
- **Be a fairness role model.** Promote fairness, but don’t make pointless comparisons. (“Our neighbor’s car is nicer than ours.”) Replace jealousy with gratefulness.
- **Relax about competitiveness at school.** It’s wonderful to celebrate high grades, but it’s more important to emphasize hard work.



Source: Cynthia Hanson, “Why Kids Are So Competitive—and How Parents Can Teach Fairness,” Parents.com, www.parents.com/teens-tweens/social-skills/tween-teen-social-skills/why-kids-are-competitive/?page=5.

Homework should not be a hassle

The words “homework” and “headache” needn’t go hand in hand! The next time your child gets flustered while doing an assignment, try saying:

- **“I appreciate how hard you’re working.”** A bit of praise may inspire her to forge ahead.
- **“How about a little breather?”**
A short break might recharge her.
- **“I can’t wait to see it when you’re finished.”** Show her that you’re interested in her work.



Source: Paul Coleman, Psy.D., “How to Say It: Homework Hassles,” FamilyEducation.com, <http://school.familyeducation.com/homework/discipline/37615.html>.

How can you tell if misbehavior is serious?

It’s not always easy to tell whether your child’s acting out is just a “rough patch” or a sign of a larger behavioral problem. But consider seeking help for your child if you notice big changes in his:

- **Eating** or sleeping habits.
- **Mood.**
- **Schoolwork.**
- **Activity level.**
- **Relationships** with friends or family.

Have you noticed a big change in your child? Talk to his guidance counselor or pediatrician.

Source: “Finding Help for Your Child,” Anxiety Disorders Association of America, www.adaa.org/GettingHelp/FocusOn/children&Adolescents/FFHFC.asp.

Hearing “no” is difficult for many kids.

But it’s easy to prevent disagreements. Try saying “no” in some new and creative ways.

For example:

- **Child:** “Mom, can I buy that CD?”
- **Mom:** “Yes. Just one more week of saving allowance, and it’s yours!”

Source: Barbara Aria, “Just Say No,” SheKnows, www.sheknows.com/articles/804952.htm.



Curb the caffeine habit

Is your child feeling especially irritable? Check her caffeine intake. Too many sodas can make your child feel (and behave) less than her best.



And don’t assume she’s not getting any caffeine if she doesn’t drink soda. Caffeine can also show up in:

- **Energy mints or drinks.**
- **Smoothies.**
- **Certain over-the-counter medications.**

Source: “Caffeine: Less Is Best,” Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/yh/archives/2008/summer/caffeine.htm.

Encourage conflict resolution by playing games

When kids play a game, two things are bound to happen: They'll have fun ... and they'll argue. Both experiences are opportunities to learn. To make the most of them:



- **Supervise the setup.** Before a game starts, make sure everyone understands how it's played. Review the rules. If each player has the same expectations, there should be fewer conflicts.
- **Be the referee.** Offer to settle disputes—within reason. For example, "I'll help with three disputes. If you need a referee four times, the game has to end." This encourages kids to resolve problems independently.

Source: "Dare to Play Fair," FamilyEducation, <http://fun.familyeducation.com/games/sportsmanship/45714.html> (excerpted from *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Family Games*).

Questions & Answers

Q: My fifth grader, who has a minor learning disability, has a tough time staying motivated in school. The more he struggles, the more upset we both become. What should I do?

A: It can be frustrating trying to inspire an unmotivated child, whether he has learning difficulties or not. While you ultimately can't "make" him get on the ball and stay motivated, here are things you can do to help:

- **Talk to him.** Get to the bottom of your child's lack of motivation. Does he really not care about doing well in school? Or is he worried that he'll "look dumb" if he gets something wrong—and so doesn't bother trying at all? Knowing the reasons behind his "I don't care" attitude may help you handle the problem more effectively.
- **Ignite his passions.** What does your child love to do? Whether it's sports, building model airplanes or designing websites, help him find a hobby he enjoys. Research shows that building know-how in a particular activity may translate into doing better in school.
- **Give him choices.** No, your child can't opt out of doing homework. But how about letting him decide which assignment to tackle first? Or when to hit the books? Or what snack to munch on while studying? Offering choices may help him take ownership of his work.
- **Tell him you love him.** When your child struggles, he may feel like it's him against the world. So remind him that you're on his side.



Source: Robbie Fanning, M.A., "Fostering Motivation in Kids With Learning and Attention Problems," GreatSchools.net, www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/showarticle/2633.

Learn the truth about lying

Lying is never okay, but it's generally not a symptom of a



larger problem, either. In other words, most kids tell lies at one time or another. But when might your child's fibbing signal a potentially larger problem? When she:

- **Seems not to understand** the difference between the truth and lies.
- **Develops a habit** of lying.
- **Isn't bothered** at all by lying.
- **Uses lies** to take advantage of others.

Source: "Children and Lying," American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_and_lying.

Change your child's procrastinating ways

Is your child's mantra, "Don't do today what you can put off until tomorrow"? You can rein in his procrastinating! Help your child:

- **Make a schedule** and remind him to follow it.
- **Break large assignments** into small pieces.
- **Find ways** to stay organized.
- **Set realistic goals.** Don't expect changes overnight.

Source: Kristen Hackney-Redman, "Don't put off reading this! Teach kids not to procrastinate," the Lubbock Avalanche-Journal, www.lubbockonline.com/stories/031308/liv_256425547.shtml.

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