**Teaching Children Manners**

**Source:** centerforparentingeducation.org

**Why is Teaching Good Manners Important?**

Helping young children learn appropriate, polite and considerate behavior enables them to form good manners and become more socially attentive as they get older. It’s easier to nurture first-class child behavior if you work as a family to set the rules for good manners in many different situations.

There are many benefits when you teach good manners to young children. Every parent loves to hear from other parents, teachers or their own parents, how polite and courteous their children are. Parents whose children know how to answer the phone politely aren’t concerned when their child picks up the phone. Parents with well-mannered children don’t agonize about sending their children on play dates to friends’ houses.

**How Can Parents Raise Children who are Polite?**

* **Model Good Behavior**

At home, you must first, and most importantly, model good behavior for your children. This may sound like common sense, but you must never overlook how much children emulate the behavior they see from their parents. Start with the essentials.

Pleases and Thank you’s

Say “please” and “thank you” throughout the day. Say it to the children. Say it to your spouse or to the sales clerk in the store. Make sure the children hear you use these words several times all throughout the day.

Encourage them to use the words too. Remind them when needed. If your child says, “Get me…” or “I’ll take…” and expects you to jump up and get something, remind your child to ask properly, using words like, “May I please have…” instead.

Everyone feels good when they are thanked, even for small things like passing the mustard.

* **Be Patient**

It may take a while; these changes don’t happen overnight, particularly if they are new to a family’s routine. But gentle (and repeated) correcting and asking children to restate their requests will reap worthwhile results.

You may need to put forth months of sustained effort to make a change, but once you hear your family speaking kindly to one another out of habit, it can really change the family dynamics for the better. It’s nice for spouses too. Husbands and wives feel good when they’re thanked for what they do to support the family, such ascooking a good meal or mowing the lawn.

* **Teach Gratitude**

There’s more to teaching manners than just words. Gratitude and politeness are valued traits in our culture.

When children express their appreciation for things that are done for them or given to them, they:

* Feel better about themselves
* Begin to see themselves as recipients rather than “takers”
* Develop a sense of empathy as they recognize that other people are going out of their way for them.

Without such expressions of gratitude, children become self-centered and take for granted all that they have. People who use “please” and “thank you” regularly come across as gracious and thoughtful, both admirable qualities.

* **Start Early**

Children as young as 18 months old can learn the fundamentals about manners by being taught to say “please” and “thank you” when appropriate, even if they do not understand the reasons for being polite.

When parents, or the important adults in a child’s life, model appropriate table manners, such as no elbows on the table and saying, ‘Please pass the salt,’ children ultimately absorb the teaching and use these manners too.

Parents can role play good manners with their children, using dolls or puppets. It can sometimes be fun to let them be the parent and you act as the unruly child.

* **Continue as Your Children Grow**

For older children, acceptable manners consist of knowing what to say when someone gives them a gift—even before they open it, what to say when they are introduced to a new individual, what to say when they answer the phone, what they can do or say if they don’t like something they’re served for lunch.

After a while, the reminders won’t be needed. As a child matures, he or she will remember appropriate manners and need less guidance.

Along the way, remember to acknowledge them when they do use proper manners: catch them being “good” because they will repeat the behavior you notice.