

Solutions at Home, Success in School

Alex wants to play with his brother's toy, but he grabs it instead of asking for a turn. Sarah knows how to put on her own clothes, but she whines for her mother to dress her.

You can use everyday situations like these to help your children learn self-control, independence, and other skills that will help them at home and at school. Try these tips for handling common parenting challenges.



Challenge: To teach your youngster to be independent

Solution: Showing your child how to do things for himself will make him more self-reliant and save you time later. Write “I can do it!” in big letters at the top of a piece of paper. When he asks for help with a task (hand washing), walk him through the steps (wet hands, pump soap, scrub, rinse, dry). Once he can do it

on his own, he gets to put it on his “I can do it” list. The next time he wants you to wash his hands, you might remind him, “That’s on your list!”

Challenge: To discourage whining

Solution: Everyone’s day will go more smoothly if your youngster asks for what she needs in a pleasant tone of voice. First, explain what whining is by pointing it out when she does it. Then, show her how to ask in a nice tone. (“Mommy, can I please have a snack?”) By not responding until she asks in a regular voice, she’ll see that whining doesn’t work. *Note:* Since children tend to whine when they’re tired or hungry, you can help prevent it by making sure your youngster gets enough sleep and has regular meals.

Challenge: To get your youngster to do chores

Solution: Helping around the house can teach your child responsibility. Try letting him decide which chores are his.

Give him a few possibilities to choose from: “Do you want to be in charge of folding towels, setting the table, or feeding the cats?” You could have him stick with the same jobs for a week so they become a habit. While his work might not be perfect, try to avoid redoing it, or he may get discouraged. *Idea:* Take a photo of your youngster doing each job. Post the pictures on the refrigerator. When he sees them, he’ll remember his chores—and he will feel a sense of pride and responsibility.

Challenge: To encourage your child to share

Solution: When your child wants a toy that a sibling or friend has, help her think of ways they can both play with it. For instance, one person might fill a dump truck with sand, and the other can empty it. Then, they can switch roles. Or you might suggest that your youngster offer to trade something for the toy (“I’ll give you my red crayon for your blue crayon when you’re done”). If they frequently fight over toys, try using a timer so each child gets the toy for a certain amount of time (say, 15 minutes).



continued

Challenge: To help your youngster develop self-control

Solution: Knowing how to handle feelings like anger and jealousy will help your child have fewer meltdowns or outbursts. Self-control can also keep her from hitting or pushing others. Teach her the names of specific emotions. (“It seems like you’re frustrated. What could you do to feel better?”) Also, try using stuffed animals to talk about her feelings. If she’s upset about losing a game, you might pretend that her teddy bear says, “I feel sad when I lose, too.” Encourage your youngster to pick another stuffed animal and have it talk to the one you’re holding. (“Me, too. I really wanted to win.”)



Challenge: To help your child adjust to a new baby

Solution: When a sibling arrives, your youngster might feel insecure about having to share your attention. Try setting aside time for just the two of you (say, while the baby naps or when another adult is in the house). You can also help him adjust by involving him in the baby’s care. If he reverts to younger behavior, like using baby talk, try not to make a big deal out of it. You might hold him on your lap and sing a lullaby. Then, show him how much fun it is to be a big kid by doing an activity together that the baby can’t do yet (make cookies, play a game of marbles). If he misbehaves more than usual, try to avoid bending the rules. He’ll feel more secure if you are consistent.



Challenge: To limit tattling

Solution: Children often tattle to get attention. When your youngster runs to tell you, “She threw a ball in the house!” you might calmly say, “Okay. If I see a problem, I’ll take care of it,” and go back to what you were doing. That way, she feels heard, but she learns that tattling doesn’t get her anywhere.

Note: Let her know it’s important for her to tell you if someone is hurt or in danger—that’s not tattling.

Challenge: To teach your child to solve problems

Solution: Your youngster will gain confidence by solving his own problems. When he’s struggling with something, try to avoid rushing in with advice. Say he’s building a fort, and the blanket keeps falling. You could ask, “Can you think of a way to fix it?” or “Do you see anything you could use to hold the blanket on the chairs?” Then, let him try out his ideas, even if you don’t think they’ll work. He will learn from trial

and error. **Tip:** Provide a box of household items that your child can use in different ways. For example, a paper-towel tube could become a microphone or a telescope. Being creative will help him become a good problem solver, too.

Challenge: To discourage screen time

Solution: If your youngster constantly asks to watch TV or play games on your phone, it might sometimes seem easier to just give in. But helping her learn to occupy herself in other ways will encourage her to be more creative and more active. Together, set up her play area so that it is inviting. Keep a fresh supply of library books in a basket, fill a shoebox with play dough and cookie cutters, and stack puzzles and games so she can see what’s available. Also, let her keep balls, a jump rope, and other outdoor toys where she can easily grab them on her way outside. Finally, help her plan ahead. Before she even turns on the TV or asks to use your laptop or tablet, say, “What are you going to play with today?” You might discover that once she is occupied, she’s less likely to think about movies and video games.

Challenge: To help your child cooperate

Solution: Working with others to accomplish a goal will teach your youngster about teamwork. When your family has a job to do, like cleaning the family room or putting away a lot of groceries, have him pitch in. During a cleanup, he could organize the board games or put away DVDs. Or when you get back from grocery shopping, he could carry in lighter bags while you get the heavier ones. **Idea:** When your child plays with siblings or friends, encourage them to do group projects. They might make clay food for a pretend restaurant or create dance moves for a song.



Early Years