

Giving and Getting Respect

Being respectful helps your middle grader get along with family members, teachers, and peers. And this important habit can lead to success in school and in the future. Encourage her to treat others well, use good manners, and follow rules.



Respect yourself

People who respect themselves believe that others should treat them well. Here are ways your tween can foster self-respect.

Stay true to yourself. Your child will earn self-respect by knowing who she is and standing by what she believes in. For instance, if she enjoys time to herself, she shouldn't feel pressured to say yes to every invitation to hang out with friends. If she doesn't think kids should smoke, she shouldn't act like cigarettes are cool. It might not always be easy, but she'll respect herself more in the long run.



Do your best. By working hard in school and at extracurricular activities, your tween demonstrates respect for herself. Explain that you want her to put effort into whatever she does. For instance, doing homework carefully, studying for tests, and practicing her musical instrument regularly all show that she takes pride in her work.

Respect others

Your middle grader won't agree with everyone all the time. These ideas can help him respect people in different situations.

Model what you mean. Your child will learn by following your example. If he is disrespectful, use it as an opportunity to

model respect. Focus on his behavior ("I don't like the way you are speaking to me") rather than on *him* ("You are so rude!"). *Tip:* Reinforce his respectful behavior by pointing it out. For example, if he tells you he was upset when you mentioned his grades in front of his aunt, you might say, "I appreciate your waiting until we got home to tell me. Let's talk about it now."

Focus on words and actions. Ask your tween to consider how what he says and does affects others. Does he make people feel respected? For instance, if he gets a grade he doesn't understand, help him practice how to bring it up with his teacher using a respectful tone. ("I'm confused about why I got a C. Do you have time to explain it to me?") Or if he disagrees with a classmate about who should be elected student council president, he could focus on the issues rather than criticizing the candidates. *Idea:* Have him think of people he looks up to and how they talk to and act toward others. They can help him understand what respect looks and sounds like.



continued



Mind your manners

Using basic manners communicates respect. Help your child make a good impression with these tips.

Practice everyday manners. Prepare your youngster for common situations by practicing polite behavior. For example, act out how to introduce someone. (“Natalie, this is Jack. Jack, Natalie.”) Or he can work on accepting compliments gracefully by smiling and saying, “Thank you.”

Discuss etiquette challenges. Brainstorm situations your tween might find himself in where he’s unsure what to do. Talk about what to do if someone gives him a birthday

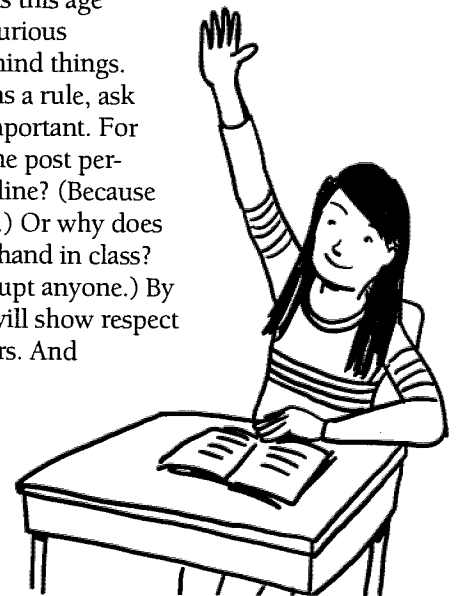
present and he already has the item. Explain that it’s possible to be both honest *and* polite by making a nice comment. (“This is my favorite color. Thanks!”) Or if he gets a phone call when he’s in line to order food, he could step outside to answer or return the call later.

Follow the rules

Abiding by rules shows respect for authority and can help your middle grader stay safe and get along with others.

Hold your child accountable. Show your tween that you take school and household rules seriously by expecting her to follow them. For example, if the school dress code says no tank tops, don’t allow her to wear them. The more you stand by rules, the more likely she is to respect them as well.

Explain rules. Kids this age are often genuinely curious about the reasons behind things. If your child questions a rule, ask why she thinks it’s important. For instance, why can’t she post personal information online? (Because strangers could see it.) Or why does she have to raise her hand in class? (So she doesn’t interrupt anyone.) By following rules, she will show respect for teachers and others. And when people feel respected, they are more likely to respect her in return.



Be a good sport

Student athletes who treat opponents, teammates, coaches, and officials with dignity show good character—and earn respect as a result. Share these ways your child can demonstrate respect on the field or court:

- Play by the rules, regardless of whether your actions can be seen by coaches or officials.
- Avoid “trash talking” to intimidate or put down opponents.
- Accept officials’ calls graciously, even if you don’t agree with them.



You can also set an example of respectful behaviors for your tween when you’re watching a sporting event with these tips:

- Offer encouragement (“Way to go!”), and refrain from booing or making negative remarks.
- Be polite to opposing teams and their fans. For example, say hello, or congratulate them on a win.
- Discuss concerns with your youngster’s coach privately, rather than in front of other players.

Middle Years