



# Good manners for children

Cultivating good manners in children teaches them to behave politely and considerately. A socially attentive child will not only be liked but also respected by other people. Good manners always leave a positive first impression and give children the tools to succeed later, as adults in our society.

## Conversation 1

**Jenny is 10. Her dad is helping her do her homework on manners. They are British.**

**Jenny:** My homework is about the importance of good manners. Can you help me?

**Dad:** Excellent topic! Shoot!\*

**Jenny:** How do manners help with relationships?

**Dad:** Good manners help us make friends. A person with good manners is always nice to spend time with.

**Jenny:** Where should a child learn good manners – at home or at school?

**Dad:** What do you think?

**Jenny:** At home! Teachers don't have time to teach schoolwork and manners.

**Dad:** True. It's also not their job. It's a parent's responsibility. Teachers just reinforce what children should already know before they start school.

**Jenny:** I have to give examples of good manners. I know we should always say 'please' and 'thank you' when we want something, and 'excuse me' if we are interrupting or trying to get past someone. What else?

**Dad:** How about not pointing your finger\* or not staring at someone?

**Jenny:** Yeah, being kind is important.

**Dad:** I agree, it's very important. And don't forget about swearing\*. It's impolite!

**Jenny:** I didn't think of swearing. Did you know that we get extra homework if we swear at school?

**Dad:** I didn't, but I bet nobody swears!



\*Definition in the 'Vocabulary' box.

## Conversation 2

**Hazel is American and Fatima is British. They're talking about their children over a cup of tea.**

**Hazel:** My son is beyond belief\*!

**Fatima:** Why, what did he do?

**Hazel:** His teacher asked me to go and see her tomorrow because he's been cussing\* at school.

**Fatima:** Has he? Oh dear...

**Hazel:** I don't know where he gets it from, certainly not from his dad and me.

**Fatima:** All children go through a period of swearing. They pick it up from their friends and social media. Does he have a mobile?

**Hazel:** Yeah, he has a cell phone, but not for much longer. I'm going to take it away as punishment.

**Fatima:** Good for you! My daughter swore like a sailor when she was six. I cringed\* every time she opened her mouth in public.

**Hazel:** What did you do to make her stop?

**Fatima:** Well, even though I was angry inside, I pretended that I wasn't bothered about it. She eventually stopped when she realised she couldn't get a rise out of\* me.

**Hazel:** Clever!

**Fatima:** Why don't you try it? It's bound to\* work on your son too. He's just looking for attention. If you don't give it to him, he'll get bored and stop.

## Conversation 3

**Jules and Brenda are British teachers. Jules is writing a list for a student teacher on how to teach young children good manners. He's asked Brenda for feedback.**

**Jules:** The first point on the list is to praise\* children for using good manners.

**Brenda:** Yeah, positive reinforcement is way better than punishment. What else do you have?



**Jules:** I said she should model polite behaviour, be able to explain why certain behaviour is not acceptable...

**Brenda:** Make sure that you tell her to keep all explanations short. Long-winded\* monologues just confuse little kids. I wish someone had told me that when I started teaching.

**Jules:** Good point! I'm adding that right now.

**Brenda:** I apologise, I interrupted you. You were saying...

**Jules:** That's okay. Number three on the list was: keep your expectations age-appropriate.

**Brenda:** Absolutely. Will you also tell her what to do if a kid doesn't understand?

**Jules:** Yeah, I explained how role playing can help kids to mind their Ps and Qs\*.

**Brenda:** Great! I can't think of anything else to add. If I do, I'll let you know. ■



## Key Phrases

- Always say 'please' and 'thank you'
- Say 'excuse me' if you interrupt or push past someone
- Don't point your finger at someone
- To swear like a sailor
- To mind your Ps and Qs

## Vocabulary

**shoot:** an expression that means 'okay, go ahead'

**to point your finger:** to indicate someone by using your finger

**to swear:** to use offensive language

**to be beyond belief:** to be unbelievable

**to cuss:** to use offensive language (American English)

**to cringe:** to be embarrassed

**to get a rise out of someone:** to make someone angry

**to be bound to:** to be almost certain

**to praise:** to show approval of someone or something

**long-winded:** long and boring

**to mind your Ps and Qs:** to make an effort to be polite (Ps = please, Qs = the expression 'thank you' which has a Q sound in the middle when you say it out loud)