

School Rules for Parents

Good morning parents! Wake Up! It's time for school. No, you are not actually going to school, your children are. But you had to put so much energy in preparing for school, it feels as though you are the student. I want to make your school year sweet and easy by presenting the following "School Rules for Parents." Here they are:

RULES

Rise before your children. Parents are managers of the home. It is imperative that they show loving, yet firm leadership by their own example. Getting up in the morning before your child does is a good example. Although there might not be a problem if a child arises before a parent, the real issue is if the parent appears to be lazy or undisciplined. Arising before the child helps the child to understand the importance of discipline and provide hands-on supervision and direction. Don't be a lazy parent.

Set bed times to allow each child to have at least 9.2 hours of sleep per night. The latest research indicates that teenagers need at least 9.2 hours to satisfactorily make it through the day. Eight hours is not sufficient time to sleep for any child under the age of 18. Teenagers who get less than 9.2 hours of sleep a night generally do not do as well academically and socially as those who get more than 9.2 hours of sleep. Ideally, teenagers thrive best getting 10 to 12 hours of sleep per night. This generation of teenagers is the most sleep deprived in the history of humankind, and they are suffering physically and mentally because of it. When your children get the right amount of sleep, they are more alert in school, less agitated, and healthier physically. If your children are in primary school, they need at least 12 to 14 hours of sleep a day. This is why they take naps during the day. Make sure the schools your primary-age children attend have nap times. Set the time for your teenagers to go to bed at the latest 9:00 p.m. and for your toddlers, 7:00 p.m. If your children go to bed long after you, the parents, then your children are the parents. Make it a practice not to leave your children up while you are in for the night. If your children already have a habit of going to sleep very late at night, they are already on the wrong track and that habit must be broken. A most important point is not to wait until your children are sleepy before they are sent to bed. That is a much undisciplined habit to develop. Set the time for your children to go to bed regardless whether or not they feel sleepy.

Prepare a healthy meal each morning. Make sure your children, pre-teenagers or teenagers, get a big, healthy breakfast every day. This is the fuel for the day. If you are a vegetarian or meat eater, make sure the breakfast is rich in complex carbohydrates (potatoes, whole grain cereals, oatmeal, grits, yams, plantains, rice) and protein (beans, eggs, fish, tofu, nuts). Eating whole grain waffles, pancakes, patties, can be wonderful for breakfast. Do you realize that everything you eat for lunch can also be eaten at breakfast time? Give your children a great blastoff each morning. Avoid giving your children junk food such as sodas, sweet juices, potato chips, sweet biscuits, candy and chocolate for lunch. These do not provide the nutrition or energy the brain needs to study well.

Control the television viewing times. Most children do not do well academically or socially watching television for hours every day. Mixing school work and television is a recipe for disaster for school-age children. Ideally, during the school year, do not allow your children to watch television. Let them concentrate on their school work and wholesome recreation. If you feel the need to allow television viewing during the school year, it is imperative that the duration and when they watch be restricted. It is unwise and counterproductive to allow your children to watch television from the time they get home from school until they fall asleep at night. Indiscriminate television viewing (1) robs the brain of the ability to create original thought, (2) makes the brain lazy, (3) encourages obesity, and (4) destroys good time management. Your children will learn more about life and social skills while playing with the neighbors' children or reading.

Create a comprehensive time table. To manage all activities, make a comprehensive chart for the entire household. This is not a class schedule. This is a detailed time table of what everyone will do from the time they get up in the morning until they go to sleep at night. It should include wake up time, devotion time, household chores, meal time, fun or chill out time, homework time and bed time. Parents should be included on the chart of activities also to be inclusive and to provide encouragement. You do not want to treat your children like little slaves. This table of activities should be created during a family chat by everyone. I would advise the parents to have an initial "manager chat" before calling the children for a household "family board meeting." The chart should include all the children, even the pre-school age ones.

Let your children get their clothes ready for school. Parents, it is not good that you always do all the ironing, washing, or preparing your children's clothing. They are to learn responsibility and accountability by preparing their own clothing for school. The older the children, the more involved they should be in readying their clothing, making up the bedroom, and preparing breakfast. If parents decide to wash all the clothing, then the children are to fold them, put them away, and prepare them to be used.

Take a look at your children's school books each day. The biggest mistake parents make is to ask the question: "Do you have any homework today?" The children can easily answer "no," and many parents would just say "okay" and leave the subject of homework alone. Parents never trust your children's response to such questioning. The better approach is to assume there is always homework to do. Even if teachers give no direct assignment, there is always revision, reading, and learning beyond the classroom. Therefore, parents should say: "Show me what you did in school today." Sit down beside your children and say: "Let us look in your books together." This should be a daily routine for parents with pre-schoolers and primary students. Parents can ask these questions: "What did you learn today?" "How would you apply what you learned in life?" Parents can have as a rule that their children must tell them one thing they learned in school that day. If your children are high-school teenagers, you may decide to give a little room for independence. However, it should be your practice to see your teenagers' books and show interest in their school work at least twice a week.

Attend PTA Meetings. Parents, your children are happy when you attend PTA meetings. They are even happier when you show interest in their school work by going to report card days. If there is some logistics that really prevents you from attending PTA meetings or report card days, you must remember that your work schedule is not a good enough excuse to miss these. Sending Grammy or Grandpa is not the answer. On the other hand, using Grammy or Grandpa might be really necessary at times, but it must not take away your responsibility of being there for your children.

Reward any improvement. Some parents have the wrong notion that they must only reward "A" and "B" grades. The principle is to praise and reward for effort and progress. If your children receive "F" in a subject, it would be an error to think that with one exam they would obtain an "A." If they achieve "C-" instead, reward them. It is a great improvement. Praise them. Encouragement and positive reinforcement go a long way. It is important to have realistic expectations for your children. Unrealistic expectations may discourage your children from trying to improve.

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