

Firm, Fair & Consistent®

Santa Rosa School District

Parents Guiding Students for School Success

April showers bring ... spring fever

Spring is in the air. This often signals the onset of an annual epidemic in schools across the nation: spring fever. On warm spring days, many students have trouble focusing on schoolwork. They daydream about places they'd rather be than in a classroom. But daily attendance through the end of the school year is critical. The first rule for doing well in school is a simple one: Your child needs to be there.



To keep on top of his attendance:

- **Tell your child that school is his most important job** and that you and his teachers expect him to be there on time every day.
- **Don't take your child out of school** for frivolous reasons. If your child is ill, he must stay home, but don't give in to "mystery illnesses."
- **Make sure the school knows** how to reach you if your child is absent.
- **Work with the school** if you find that your child has actually skipped school. There may be more than spring fever going on. Could he be the victim of a bully? Is he struggling in a particular class? Talk to your child first and then to his teachers and other school officials if you continue to have concerns.

Consider adjusting your child's homework and study routine at home. Spending some time outdoors before he tackles his books may allow him to focus better on his schoolwork and make study time more productive.

Can you count your family's written-in-stone



rules on one hand? If not, you may be trying to enforce too many. Although rules are important, your child may have a tough time remembering more than a few.

Keep things simple by regularly emphasizing your most important basics, such as no hitting, no backtalk, etc. Then as your child matures, you can modify your home- and school-related rules, knowing she has the basics down pat.

Negotiation: Is it a parenting no-no?

It's time for bed, but your child pleads, "Ten more minutes ... please!" Is it okay to negotiate with kids about things like bedtime or family chores? After all, you're the parent.

The short answer is *yes*—but not on the spot. Once in a while, sit down together and have a calm discussion about family rules. Listen to your child. It's good to consider his opinions, but you make the final decisions—and expect your child to abide by them.

Source: "The Art of Negotiating With Kids," PBS Parents, www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/negotiate.html.

Be alert for signs of stress

After-school activities can be fun, stimulating and great learning experiences. But when kids are overscheduled, those activities can also lead to stress-related behavior issues.



Instead of saying, "I'm too tired for soccer," for example, your child might simply act cranky, moody or irritable. So look beyond the behavior to its roots. Eliminating an activity may be the solution.

Source: "10 Signs Your Kids are Overscheduled," RealSimple, www.realsimple.com/work-life/family/kids-parenting/overscheduled-kids.

Time spent with your child ... priceless!

What is your child's favorite reward? Stickers and lollipops may be fine, but your child's best reward is time with you!

So try to spend a few unrushed moments with your child every day, even if it's just for a quick conversation while setting the table or laying out school clothes for the following day.

Use the time to learn about what's going on at school—and use it to simply enjoy your child! Be sure to reinforce her good behavior while you're at it: "It's so nice that you help me with these chores. I love being with you and I really appreciate your hard work."



Avoid standoffs; offer choices

You ask your child to do something and she refuses. You ask again and she continues to challenge your request. How do you get around such seemingly endless power struggles? Offer choices. No one likes to be told what to do all the time. But if your child feels she has some say over what she does, she's less likely to get into a battle of wills. Here are some tips:



- **Offer a choice** within a “no-choice” situation. For example, your child doesn't get to decide if she's going to do her homework. But you *can* ask, “Would you rather have a snack before or after you do your homework?”
- **Provide guidance** as she makes choices. Make a list together of pros and cons for each possible choice. Help her examine likely consequences.
- **Be prepared to compromise.** Recognize that your beliefs may differ.
- **Allow her to make some mistakes** and learn from the consequences of poor choices.

Questions & Answers

Q: Mornings at our house are very hectic. In order to get everyone out the door on time, I really need their cooperation. I've established a rule: no electronics before school. My nine-year-old constantly tries to break the rule, which adds to the morning chaos. Aside from taking away his games forever, what can I do?

A: All kids break the rules once in a while, so try not to become furious each time it happens. When your child does disobey, enforce the consequence (for example, ban the games for a few days). Then use these problem-solving steps to teach him ways to avoid making the same mistake again—and to remind him that he's responsible for his choices:



1. **Ask him to name the problem:** “I want to play computer games after breakfast, but Mom says school mornings are too rushed already and she's worried that I'll miss the bus.”
2. **Have him brainstorm solutions:** “If I do my homework right after school, I'll have extra time to play computer games in the afternoon.” Or, “If I put my games away before bed, I won't see them lying out and be tempted to play them in the morning.”
3. **Discuss his ideas with him,** and have him choose which to try first. “Tomorrow, I'll finish my homework by four o'clock. That way, I'll have 20 minutes to play one game before soccer.”
4. **Try his solution.**
5. **Evaluate the outcome.** Did it work? Fantastic. Did it fail? He may want to try his other idea. Putting his games out of sight might be the best solution. Or brainstorm again and see what other approaches he could try.

Source: M.E. Gootman, Ed.D., “How to Teach Your Children Discipline,” KidSource Online, www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/discipline.3.19.html.

Your child may simply need your presence

Something appears to be bothering your child, but he won't talk about it. What do you do?



Sometimes, kids just don't feel like discussing why they're down in the dumps. But this doesn't mean they want to be left alone—they simply don't want to talk about it. Respect that.

You can help by just being there. Suggest something you can do together—you might shoot some hoops or bake cookies. Your company may be all the support your child needs right now.

Learning begins with self-discipline at home

When teachers have to stop teaching to handle discipline problems, valuable learning time is lost. That's why the discipline your child learns at home is so important for her success at school.



To build your child's self-discipline:

- **Be clear** about the behavior you expect. Explain that teachers also have expectations for classroom behavior.
- **Enforce consequences.**
- **Be consistent.** Rules are meaningless if you enforce them one day and ignore them the next.

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