

# Firm, Fair & Consistent<sup>1</sup>

Our Savior Lutheran School, Aiea, Hawaii  
<http://osls-hawaii.org>

Guiding Students for School Success

## Missing school also means missing out on learning

A missed day here, a missed day there. Does being absent really affect learning? “Yes!” say experts. When kids miss too much school, everyone suffers. Absent students may fall behind, and catching up distracts from lessons and may be disruptive to the rest of the class. Some absences are unavoidable, of course, but it helps when families:

- **Prepare at night.** Choose outfits, pack lunches and prepare school bags at night. Get to bed on time and set a morning alarm. Fall asleep relaxed, knowing you’re ready for the next day.
- **Streamline mornings.** Wake up at the same time each day and stick to a routine. If your child tends to forget certain responsibilities, make a chart to keep her on track. Take family pride in being prompt.
- **Avoid conflicts.** When possible, schedule appointments and trips when school isn’t in session. If your child needs to miss school, notify the school and ask about make-up work.
- **Learn school policies.** Find out when students should stay home from school and the difference between excused and unexcused absences. If child care, transportation or other issues affect your child’s attendance, ask about helpful community resources.



## Firmness matters—now and later

Being firm with your child won’t just help you maintain order now. It may help her become a more secure adult later.

Research shows that kids whose parents are loving, but firm, are more likely to:

- **Succeed in school.**
- **Take care of themselves.**
- **Be emotionally well-developed.**
- **Be happy.**

Why? Parents who are firm are good at setting clear boundaries. And this clarity, in turn, helps their kids have a better understanding of how they’re expected to behave.

Source: Madeline Levine, Ph.D., *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating a Generation of Disconnected and Deeply Unhappy Kids*, ISBN: 0-06-059584-1, HarperCollins.



## Learning disability? Teach social skills

Good social skills are vital when it comes to getting along with others at school. But if your child has a learning disability, he may struggle in social situations. You can help.

To teach your child social skills:

- **Set small goals.** If he’s shy, encourage him to say “hi” to just one new person each day.

- **Role-play.** “Okay, honey. Pretend you want to join my game. What do you say?”



Source: A. Logsdon, “Top 6 Tips to Teach Social Skills and Help Kids Make Friends,” About.com, <http://learningdisabilities.about.com/od/instructionalmaterials/tp/tchkdssocskills.htm>.

Where did your child get that language coming from his mouth? Before you start looking on the school playground, take a peek closer to home. It’s possible he picked it up from TV shows—or even from you.

Kids learn by example, so if you don’t want your child to curse, you shouldn’t either—no matter how upset you are or how much you wish your favorite team hadn’t just blown that play.



## Use exercise to boost your child’s self-control

What simple activity improves mood, focus and thinking? Exercise! And when these things improve, so does behavior and self-control.

Encourage your child to get moving every day. Plan some activities together, such as kickball or riding bikes. You can even play an active game of Simon Says.

Aim for at least 30 minutes of vigorous exercise a day.

Source: Rebecca Kajander and Timothy Culbert, M.D., *Be Fit, Be Strong, Be You*, ISBN-13: 978-1-57542-307-4, Free Spirit Publishing.

## Procrastination offers little relief

Procrastination is a terrible habit for students. Putting things off feels like a relief at first, but then becomes stressful. If your child is a procrastinator, help him:



- **Consider consequences.** Imagine what will happen if homework is finished early, on time or late. Go for the best result.
- **Focus on the positive.** How will it feel to get things done? (Great!) That's better than thinking, "This assignment is going to be awful!"
- **Start slowly.** When dreading a task, try it for just five minutes. It probably won't be as difficult as it seems.
- **Challenge himself.** Estimate how long a task will take. Then race to "beat the clock." It's fine to allow a 10- to 15-minute rejuvenating break, such as a brisk walk, if needed.

Source: Pamela Espeland and Elizabeth Verdick, *See You Later, Procrastinator!* ISBN-13: 978-1-57542-278-7, Free Spirit Publishing.

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** My fifth grader hardly ever seems to listen to me and he balks at following rules. How can I teach him to have respect for authority when I don't feel like I have any in my own home?

**A:** Remind yourself that *you are the adult and you are in charge*. Your job isn't to sit back and wait for your child to start following the rules. Your job is to set fair, reasonable rules and then enforce them consistently. Your child will have more respect for your authority when he sees that you're serious—and that displays of bad temper won't sway you.



To teach your child to respect your authority:

- **Give him some control.** Kids often bristle at authority because they crave independence. So let your child make some decisions each day. Just keep them simple: "Would you like to start your homework now or after dinner?" If he replies, "Neither," respond, "Okay, I'll decide for you."
- **Be clear.** Do you get angry when he doesn't do something you ask? Make sure he knows what you want. For instance, don't say, "Clean your room." Instead, say, "Make your bed, put your dirty clothes in the hamper and vacuum your rug." Sometimes, his "lack of respect" is really a lack of understanding.
- **Stay calm.** Re-establishing your authority takes time, so don't lose your cool in the process. Show your child that he can't push your buttons, and he won't just *recognize* your authority—he'll come to *respect* it, too.

Source: Dr. R. Bell, "5 Tips for Teaching Students to Respect Authority," TheApple.com, <http://theapple.monster.com/benefits/articles/7576-5-tips-for-teaching-students-to-respect-authority>.

## Obese kids may be targets for bullies

Obesity as a serious health issue among children is always in the news. But it doesn't just impact kids' health. It may make them more likely to be bullied at school.



A new study shows that overweight kids in third through sixth grades are 65 percent more likely to be picked on than other students.

Focus on good nutrition. Make sure you offer your child healthy foods at regular mealtimes.

Source: A. Harding, "Obese Kids More Vulnerable to Bullies," Health.com, <http://news.health.com/2010/05/03/obese-kids-bullying>.

## Keep your child calm at school-project time

Does your child become frantic when a big project looms? To keep her from melting down, have her:

- **Mark the deadline** on the calendar. It will be a clear reminder of when it's due.
- **Break up** the assignment. Divide it into smaller tasks—make an outline, write a topic sentence.
- **Stockpile supplies.** She may be less anxious if she has poster board and index cards on hand.



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