

ESTABLISHING HOUSE RULES

House rules outline clear expectations for behavior that parents establish for themselves and their children to follow.

Why Is Establishing a Set of House Rules Important?

1. People can't "forget" the rules.
2. Avoids potential arguments
 - a. By making expectations clear.
 - b. By setting limits.
 - c. Can't argue if a rule exists.
 - d. Can't argue about how a rule should be interpreted.
3. Specifically states the rules for living together, generally regarding privacy and respect.

Guidelines for Parents

When do you set up or post a rule?

1. When you repeatedly tell your child the same thing
2. When people in the family are having difficulty following the rules (if everyone follows a rule, then it does not need to be posted).

How do you make it easier for your family to follow the rules?

1. No more than five house rules at a time. With younger children, you may want to start with two or three rules and add to the list as they master the first ones.
2. Be very specific when writing the rules (e.g., "Be home by 10:30" instead of, "Be home at a decent hour," or "Pick up your toys, make your bed, and put your clothes directly in the hamper" instead of "Clean your room").
3. Everyone in the household should agree to live by the rules set. This means adults and children.
4. You gain more cooperation if the rules are negotiated by everyone in the family (all family members should be involved):
 - a. You can get some things you want.
 - b. They get some things they want.

Note: Sometimes just writing the rule down helps solve the problem. However, you may need to establish set consequences for breaking specific house rules (if the rule is broken more than once). Consequences should be applied every time the rule is broken.

Examples of House Rules

1. Everyone is expected to be home and ready to eat when dinner is ready at 6 o'clock.
2. If you make a mess, clean it up.
3. Going out on a school night must be negotiated in advance, and all school work must be completed prior to going out.
4. Ask before borrowing things that belong to others. If you break or damage a borrowed item, you need to replace it.
5. Knock and wait for a response before opening someone's closed door.
6. Nights before school days, curfew is 10:30. On nights before days off, curfew is midnight.

Homework

1. Come up with a list of common difficulties that occur in your household.
2. Establish a set of house rules that address these difficulties.
3. Negotiate a set of house rules with your family.
4. Set clear consequences for breaking house rules.