



Morning and Evening Chores

Research has proven that doing chores helps children learn the value of work and making a contribution to the family. Children who do chores at home are more willing to work hard at all tasks, including schoolwork. Therefore, children need a specific set of duties to be fulfilled each day, which could be presented in the form of a checklist that follows a logical sequence. The list teaches order, accomplishment, helpfulness, and the advantages of being organized, which are all personal responsibilities of being a kindergartner. The checklist also helps you and your child work together to practice the chores on the list and check off the day on *Uncle Dan's Report Card* that the chore was completed. You and your child are on the same team, encouraging the behavior, which builds a positive relationship between you two – another bonus from doing chores with a checklist!

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Make a chore checklist with your child that will include those things you agree would make your home organized, clean, and safe.** (See sample checklist below.)
- **Point out the chores that are your personal responsibility and those that are his.**
- **Share stories with your child about chores you did as a child.**
- **Do chores with your child to make the activity a habit that is seen as fun and special because you're sharing time together.**
- **Let your child check off the chore on the chart when he's done to recognize that he's taken care of his personal responsibility.**
- **Praise your child's effort in completing the chores on the checklist.** Praising effort, rather than the completed project, encourages children to give good effort in any assigned task. Say, "I'm so glad you made your bed. Your effort makes your room look so nice."
- **Use privileges as incentives to complete chores by using Grandma's Rule.** Say, for example "When you have emptied the waste baskets, then we can read a story. This teaches your child the positive consequences of taking personal responsibility for his own "work."

Sample Chores	DAYS OF THE WEEK						
	S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
My Morning Checklist							
Make my bed							
Put toys away							
Feed and water pets							
My Evening Checklist							
Empty wastebaskets							
Set the table for dinner							
Clear the table after dinner							



Follow Directions and Be Prompt

Following directions and being prompt means being aware of boundaries and respecting those limits for the greater good of everyone. When their environment doesn't provide them with rules and boundaries, children often behave inappropriately and become anxious because they don't know what's expected of them. Schools have rules about being on time in order to function as a team. Their rules about promptness help keep the school running efficiently, as do your directions to be "on time", the respectful and responsible habit you want your child to practice.

Children learn to care for others by being cared for themselves, and they learn to respect others by being respected themselves. Parents can build their child's trust by

helping him learn to make decisions, follow directions, and accept the consequences of his choices.

Rules are important guidelines that help people live orderly lives in a comfortable society. When children develop the habit of being on time, for example,

that behavior becomes routine, and they practice doing so without having to be told. In fact, they may even encourage you to be on time! They take personal responsibility for their actions... and like the good feeling it gives them and others!

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Encourage promptness.** To survive in today's world, children must have a sense of time, but awareness of time is a programmed skill that is most easily learned after the age of 6 years. Use a single-ring timer to help your child develop a sense of time. Set the timer for 5 minutes, if you want your child to stop or start a behavior in that amount of time, for example.
- **Reinforce following directions.** Praise your child's following your directions and being on time. Use this simple opportunity: When you say that it's time for dinner, thank your child for coming to the kitchen when you ask.
- **Give positive directions to guide your child's behavior, such as: "Please talk to your brother nicely" and "Please ask permission before you go outside to play."** These are more likely to become positive habits when they are practiced each day.
- **Always give directions that tell your child what you want him to do, rather than what you don't want him to do.** For example, say, "Please ask an adult to hold your hand before going across the street", instead of saying, "Don't cross the street alone."
- **Teach your child to follow your directions by asking him to tell you what the directions are for crossing the street, for example.**





Take Books, Lunch, and Notes To and From School

Children may be given many things to take home from school or to carry from home to school, but they often have trouble remembering to make the deliveries. Being organized is one skill that many children (and adults!) have difficulty acquiring, but a skill that will be a child's best friend in school! Knowing where her "stuff" is can help a child feel confident and responsible for her own world. Those feelings contribute to being able to concentrate on school, not on lost belongings. Helping a child devise systems of organizing her schoolwork, including books, lunch and notes, at this age, will serve her well as she accumulates more "stuff" in her life.

Help children take personal responsibility for their schoolwork by asking to see the notes they have from their teacher to home or from home to their teacher. *Uncle Dan's Report Card* is a big, colorful reminder note for children to "check" when they've completed the tasks of taking their belongings to and from school each day.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- Provide your child with a backpack or book bag into which she can put things that need to go home or back to school.
- Establish a routine at home that requires all notes from home, completed homework, books, pencils, or anything else to be delivered to school be put in the backpack immediately before moving on to a new activity.
- Look through your child's backpack as soon as possible after she gets home from school, and praise her responsible behavior when she shows you each item delivered home from school.





Bathe and Brush Teeth Regularly

Help your child bathe at least every other day, and brush his teeth after breakfast and before bed. This routine can become part of the daily ritual, as natural as using a spoon to eat ice cream! Children are often reluctant to take time out of their busy day to bathe, and parents are often too busy and too harried to ensure good physical hygiene. But they are part of using good manners, and showing respect to yourself and to others.

Getting children to brush their teeth is often a nightly battle; and when the inevitable braces are thrown into the equation, the battle intensifies. It's reported that dental health has declined as the amount of sugar children ingest increases. Soft drinks and sweet fruit juices, the mainstay of many children's diets, are the biggest culprits in contributing to tooth decay, gum disease, and obesity. Bad dental health is a major distraction to children trying to learn in school; teeth and gum pain makes children unable to concentrate on reading, writing and arithmetic.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Encourage your child to drink water when thirsty, instead of sweetened or carbonated drinks.**
- **Model good dental hygiene by brushing your teeth beside your child, so he can watch you and imitate how you brush.**
- **Praise good brushing techniques and a good report from his dental checkup; ask your child's dentist how often she recommends your child visit her.**
- **Use bath time as a social ritual, with parents discussing the day's events while bathing preschoolers. As children grow into the modest stage of development and no longer want parents to be in the room during bath time, they will have gotten into the bath routine and will be more likely to take personal responsibility for their good grooming.**
- **Emphasize how nice it feels to be clean and know you are respecting yourself and others by taking care of your hygiene.**





Be Truthful and Honest

Imagine a world in which no one values truth and honesty. You wouldn't have any confidence in what others are doing and saying, so making plans or counting on anybody would be impossible. Relationships would be very difficult, business dealings would be shaky, and children's learning in school would be limited as they cheat their way through. Emotionally, anxiety and lack of trust would be the norm as you struggle to trust those with whom you associate.

Imagining this kind of world teaches children to want to tell the truth and be honest, which will help them build loving, caring relationships with others.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Model truthfulness and honesty, and tell your children when you have been tempted to tell a lie.** Say, "I returned the money to the cashier who gave me too much change, even though I would have liked to have kept it. I wanted to be honest. It feels good to tell the truth."
- **Explain how truthfulness and honesty build trust between people.** Give examples from your own friendships and those in your child's life.
- **When your child doesn't tell the truth, talk calmly with her about the situation.** Ask what she learned from the situation, how she felt about telling a lie, and how she could have told the truth if she was in the situation again. Role-playing honesty is a good way to focus on what you want your child to learn, not what mistakes she made.





Do Acts of Kindness

Committing kind acts, such as volunteering to help parents, helping younger siblings get dressed, and treating other children as friends... these are examples of simple kindnesses that can become everyday habits.

Kindness reinforces our belonging to the group and results in an uplifting sensation that we desire to repeat. In a culture that strives to define itself as being a caring, unselfish society, the fact that kindness is contagious is an important truth. It is how the population sustains itself, in good times as well as bad.

Something happens inside of us when we commit an act of kindness that results in good feelings and good health. As in the famous story of

Dorothy, who was seeking the path back “home” in her search for the “Wonderful Wizard of Oz,” we find that the way to achieve a sense of wellbeing is really within us. Nobody’s born with prejudice and unkindness already built in. It’s in the best interest of all human beings to practice habits of kindness.

Many children expect to be given everything, without doing anything on their part to help others. Encouraging children to be helpful and to do more than is on their daily chore lists, for example, will teach them to be aware of the needs of others and gives them practice in the fine art of having empathy.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Tell your child “I love you” every day, and treat her with kindness without your child “doing” any particular thing at all!** We all need to know that we are loved by our mother and father, as well as those who care for us who are not our parents, just because we are precious human beings. Telling a child “I love you” is a priceless gift of kindness she’ll never forget, and will always keep inside of her as a source of comfort in good times and bad.
- **Be kind to others.** When we engage in habits of kindness ourselves, our children are more likely to follow our lead.
- **Reinforce kindness.** When children are kind to others, praise the act by describing what was done and telling them that you are proud of their behavior. Children need to be “caught being good”!
- **Establish family kindness goals.** Talk about and plan acts of kindness your family can do together, such as donate cans of food, pick up weeds in a neighbor’s yard, or visit a friend whose pet is lost to cheer her up, for example. Not only will your child learn kindness from your example, but he will also practice his natural empathy.
- **Ask for your child’s help by saying, “I need your help to take out the trash,” for example.** Telling your child that you need her help encourages empathy (putting herself in your shoes and feeling what you are feeling) and helps her know that you believe she is important and special.
- **Praise your child’s assistance by telling her how much you appreciate her effort and how much fun it is to have her working with you.**





Use Good Manners

Manners are social niceties that are based on empathy and help us live comfortably with others. Courtesy and good manners are important to the smooth functioning of our society. Children who are taught to be courteous and to use good manners are considerate of others, increase the pleasantness of everyday life, and reduce its conflicts, thus reducing the pollution of incivility around them. All cultures have “rules” that are transmitted by adults to children through modeling, and social rules have a purpose: they ensure our inclusion in the group, a natural desire of humans.

Being considerate of others requires self-discipline and self-awareness – two important, but sometimes difficult, skills to practice at an early age and throughout life! Good manners – how to eat politely at the table, listen when others speak, say “please and thank you,” for example – may be lost on

children who primarily interact with people through non-human objects, such as computers, cell phones, and messaging systems. So it is even more important today to

teach a child good manners by personally modeling the manners you want him to use and paying special attention (Say “Thanks for using good manners!”) when he uses them.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Model good manners for children.** When you limit using cell phones in quiet public places; choose to say “hello” and “goodbye” to people you meet; and say “please” and “thank you” when talking with your child, you are showing good manners.
- **Set limits on the number of times food is eaten in the car, instead of at a table at home or a restaurant, each week.** Children can only learn table manners by practicing them with silverware, plates, napkins and cups... at a table! Praise good manners when your child uses them. Your attention to her manners will encourage her to continue to use them, with you and without your being near.
- **Point out good manners when you see them in others and your child (look how polite the lady in the grocery store was by saying “thanks” and “hello”, for example).** Your child will feel good about your noticing these behaviors, and doing so will help your child develop the self-discipline and self-awareness he needs to create positive relationships with others that much of the world simply takes for granted!





Respect Self and Others

Children are born with self-respect, which is displayed in their need to get what they think they need. They cry to tell adults that they are hurting and need something: an adult's attention, a hug, or nourishment. This self-respect is the basis of respect for others. As adults care for and nurture young children, they learn to care about and respect others. The only way to ensure children's respect is to treat them with respect, which means giving them the emotional support and the empathy they deserve.

Respect can also be found in the words adults use when talking with their children: Teaching them to do what they ask them to do by using please (instead of blaming or shaming them for doing something wrong); and using loving words even when they don't love what their children do! When parents use self-control, even in the face of their children's lack of self-control, they show their child how to respect others and themselves.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Treat your child with respect by listening to him, showing empathy and understanding his point of view, each of which encourages him to repeat these behaviors.**
- **Show your child how to think about others' feelings by pointing out how they might feel in a situation, why they might think differently from him, and how "understanding" doesn't always mean "agreeing" with another's point of view. You can agree to disagree!**
- **Model respect for your child by asking his opinion about things; asking his permission to change things in his room; or giving him privacy when he wants it.** Doing so will help develop a positive relationship between you and your child, and help him know that you respect his thoughts and input! Everyone wants to feel that he or she makes a difference... from the simplest to most complicated of life issues!





Express Gratitude

Children who care about the feelings of others can learn to express those feelings... even if they do not seem comfortable at it during this stage of their development. They not only understand gestures of kindness and caring that others extend to them (a hug, a smile, a handshake, a high-five, for example), but they also know how people respond positively when they extend the same kindness! To be able to express appreciation, children's own natural empathy must be encouraged, so they are aware of the feelings of others. Expressions of gratitude will stimulate an emotional reaction in your child that will encourage him to continue saying "thanks" in his own special way.

Feeling grateful for what he receives, for what's done for him, or for having you around is probably something that your child experiences from time to time. But good social skills require that he be able to say how grateful he is. His expressions of thankfulness can be combined with practice in writing, by having him draw "thank-you pictures" to express

his affection to you, to his grandmother, or his teacher, for example. For non-writers, ask your child what he wants to say, write it out for him, and ask him

to copy what you've written; or he could draw a picture of what he's grateful for, and you could write down what he wants to say about it.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Model expressions of appreciation.** When you say "thank you" to your child for what he does, he will learn the good feelings that come from receiving your thanks and will learn from you how to give thanks to others. Gently remind him that expressing gratitude helps everyone feel good – the giver (you!) and the receiver (him!).
- **Make expressing appreciation a priority for you and your child.** Tell your child how important it is to acknowledge others' kindnesses, such as saying "thanks" for a gift, calling Aunt Sally on the phone to say how much you love the doll she gave you, or sending drawings to Grandma to express how much you loved her visit. When you prioritize this every time your child receives something (a birthday, a holiday, a special occasion, or just to say "thanks" for being a great friend), the behavior becomes routine. Doing so helps your child get in touch with his feelings, develop social skills, and realize that others' behavior has an impact on him, just as his behavior has an impact on others.
- **Use privileges as motivation to draw the picture, make the call or give a hug by saying, "When you have drawn a picture for Grandpa, then you can go outside and play."**
- **Always require the writing of thank-you notes when your child receives something as a gift, has been invited to a party, or has been a guest.** Thank-you notes help him get in touch with his feelings, as well as develop his social skills.
- **Praise expressions of kindness.** Giving your child praise for saying thanks to those who give him presents or do him favors will encourage him to repeat this caring habit. It will serve him well to build positive relationships throughout his life. Everyone appreciates being appreciated!



Read at Home

Reading at home can take many forms for Kindergartners: Picture books, children's magazines, and cereal boxes can be read to a child by an older child or adult... or a child may be reading simple words at this age. The more practice a child has in reading or in being read to, the more chances she will have to improve her reading skills. Kindergartners' reading at home (or being read to) can replace Screen Time (which has been found to reduce children's reading skills).

Reading readiness means that a child is learning to the skills she needs to learn to read and differs with each child's developmental progress. Check with your child's teacher for ways to encourage your unique child's reading readiness, as is best for her. Remember that each child will develop according to her own timetable. Your talking about your love of reading, reading to your child, and

discovering fun books will help her love this activity. However, if your child has difficulty reading at home or does not want to be read to at home, talk

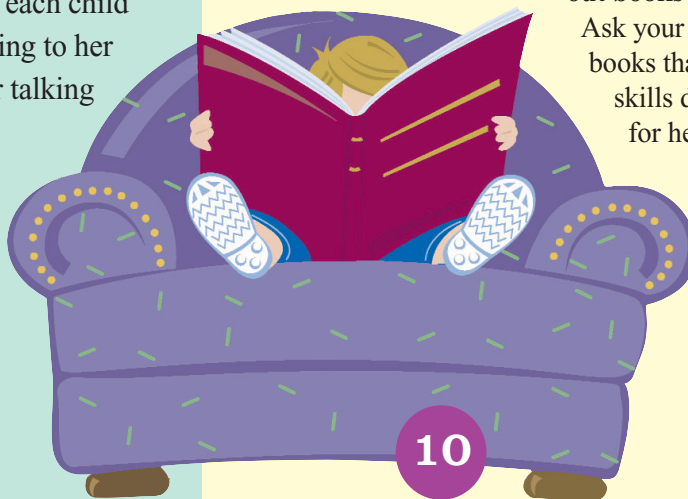
with her teacher about ways to encourage the activity or evaluate what may be causing her frustration with learning to read or enjoying this activity.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Set aside time every day for your child to be read to and practice sounding out words, if she is able to do so.**
- **Make reading together a part of your child's routine before bedtime, for example, so she associates it with a time for your attention and comfort.** If you have more than one child, try to take time to read to each child alone sometimes, to get to know each child's special interests in sounds and pictures.
- **Praise your child's reading skills by saying how well she is able to sound out words or how well she "reads" a particular word.** It's the joy of reading that will encourage your child to love books as she grows
NOTE: By having one-on-one reading time with your Kindergartner (and each of your children), you can discover if your child is having difficulty reading (does she need glasses?), hearing your voice read the words (does her hearing need testing?), or sounding out words (is there a comprehension problem?). Check with your child's teacher if you are concerned.

- **Go to the library with your child and encourage her to check out books to read or for you to read to her.**

Ask your child's teacher for recommended books that will help your child's reading skills develop at a level that is appropriate for her.





Manage Screen Time

Screen time involves watching television, playing video games, and using computers. Television is a wonderful teacher, but sometimes what it teaches isn't good for children. Research has found that watching several hours of TV each day reduces children's reading skills by addicting them to fast-paced, emotionally-charged images rather than creating images in their minds based on words they're reading. Other research studies have found that young children's brains are actually changed by watching several hours of TV, including top-rated children's programming.

It's been found that every hour of TV watched each day increases by nine percent the bullying potential of a child. So the average of 3.5 hours of television that children watch each day increases their bullying potential by 30 percent!

In many households, there's barely enough time to do homework, and that's done just before bed. A California survey indicated that the more TV children watch, they less time

they want to spend in school. So, a "school night" filled with the "fun" of playing video or computer games, makes the prospect of sitting in school more difficult to face and reduces learning readiness.



Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Choose the programs that you and your child agree are good for him to watch alone and/or to watch together.** Then mark those days and times on a chart, ensuring that he has time for family fun, chores, free play, exercise/sports, eating, sleeping, schoolwork, and reading also on his schedule before fitting in "screen time." In this way, your child learns the habit of filling his life with activities beyond the world of a screen.
- **Make a deal about how your child earns screen time, while setting a maximum limit.** It can be earned by doing extra chores, reading, or being helpful to parents or siblings, for example.
- **Watch what your child is watching, what sites she is surfing or video games she is playing so you will know whether they are appropriate and can discuss with her what she's seeing.** Talk about what's happening on the screens, which encourages her verbal skills and lets you know how much she understands.



Eat Healthy Dinner With The Family

Eating a healthy dinner with the family means sitting at a table, with the TV off, using plates, napkins and dinnerware, while enjoying food from the basic food groups – meat, dairy, carbohydrates, fats, and fruits and vegetables. The most recent food pyramid from the U. S. Department of Agriculture encourages us all to eat more fruits and vegetables each day. Not only will we be healthier, but the research tells us that our brains will work better when our diet is healthy. For your child to do her best in school, proper diet is, therefore, essential. *Uncle Dan's Report Card* gives you a way to encourage your child to eat properly by increasing her awareness of those essential fruits and vegetables required for a good diet.

Currently, one of the greatest predictors of good behavior and academic achievement in school is the family dinner. Children who eat dinner with the family at least three times a week are

better behaved and achieve at a higher level than those who don't. What's the magic of family dinner? First of all, at the dinner table, people talk to each other, and the stimulation of language results in better achievement in school. Then when children are included in the dinnertime discussion, they

are validated because their opinions mean something to other family members. Finally, they learn manners and the social skills required to get along with others. Family dinners, whether at home or in a restaurant, are important for family bonding, learning, and social development.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Make fruits and vegetables available for your child every day for snacks and meals.**
- **Plan family dinners at least three nights each week.** Use dinner plates, knives, forks spoons, napkins... and manners! Eating at restaurants is best for your child when you can conduct family conversations.
- **Encourage manners**, such as using napkins to wipe one's mouth; cutting food with a fork or knife; using a spoon to eat certain foods, such as cereal, instead of fingers; speaking when one's mouth is not full; and taking turns in conversation.
- **Praise your child's using manners** by noticing when she wipes her mouth with a napkin (not her sleeve!) and asks for a dish to be "passed" instead of grabbing for a piece of bread, for example.





Get At Least 11 Hours of Sleep Each Day

For a 5-year-old child to get sufficient sleep each night, she must be in bed at least 11 hours before she needs to wake up in the morning. Children who don't get enough sleep each night end up being sleepy and grumpy in school. Five-year-old children need about 11 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period, and 8-year-old children need 10 hours of sleep. By the time your child is 14, he'll still need nine and a half hours of sleep each night.

Even losing an hour of sleep each night will have a noticeable effect on your child's mental performance. Research has demonstrated that sleep deficiency may harm brain development in young children and can contribute to school problems, such as attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder. Therefore, ensuring adequate sleep each night is very important to promoting your child's school success.



Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Decide on an appropriate hour as a bedtime for your child**, so he can get the healthy number of hours of sleep he needs to function at his best.
- **Use a bedtime routine that allows your child to calm himself and relax before bed.** Reading to him for a few minutes before his bedtime is a good quiet activity.
- **Use a timer to control your child's bedtime routine.** Getting ready for bed before the timer rings can be a fun game and can earn your child the reward of having a bedtime snack and reading time.

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Get At Least 1 Hour of Exercise Each Day

According to a recent study, giving kindergartners at least 5 hours of physical education time per week – the amount recommended by the government – could potentially reduce the prevalence of obesity and overweight among girls by 43 percent. The study of 11,000 children did not show the same results in boys, but the results demonstrate the importance of addressing exercise as a prevention tool to avoid the diseases of high blood pressure, type-IJ diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease and depression – health problems typically referred to a adult diseases, according to the Centers for Disease Control. At least 80% of children with type IJ diabetes are overweight, according to the National Institute of Diabetes.

Physical exercise not only helps children stay healthy and avoid the epidemic of obesity, but it also improves their ability to pay attention and learn at

school. However, in today's world, with so much entertainment available that requires children only to push buttons while they sit, exercise is hard to encourage. Therefore,

Uncle Dan's Report Card encourages getting exercise by replacing activities that involve sitting and watching a screen, with those that involve movement and active play.

Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Play physical activities, such as jumping jacks, backyard soccer, or kickball with your child when he comes home from school.** If you are not available to play with him, ensure that your child is in a childcare program or with a childcare provider who encourages physical exercise or teaches your child a sport.
- **Limit screen time by making deals with your child to “purchase” time to watch TV, play video games or use the computer.** An example of a “deal” might be: Your child can buy screen time (within limited amounts of restricted programs and games, as long as doing chores, homework, reading, eating and bedtime are kept) by doing physical activity for two minutes for every minute of screen time.
- **Model physical activity for your children by taking them on walks, bike rides, or trips to the park to play.**

