



Parenting the Preschooler

Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

How does your child use good manners?

Ages & Stages

PRECHOOLER A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

YOUNG CHILD A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

Minding Our Language

Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.

Having good manners means knowing how to act politely around other people. Good manners can mean things like saying “please” and “thank you,” using a napkin at dinner, waiting patiently at the bank, or talking in a quiet voice inside. Manners are important because the way a child acts affects how other children and adults feel about them. Children are not born with good manners; they must learn them. It is your job as a parent to decide what is important to you and how you expect your child to act. The manners that your preschooler learns today will be with them for life.

Try some of the following ways to help your child learn good manners:

- Have realistic expectations. Young children do not always know that they are being rude.
- Tell your child why manners are important to you and to others.
- Tell your preschooler what to do rather than what not to do. (*“Use a quiet voice, please”* rather than *“Quit yelling!”*)
- Give them the words they need to express their feelings. If they say, “I hate this food!” try saying, “I’d like to hear you say, ‘I don’t like broccoli.’”
- Be consistent. This helps your child understand what behavior you will and will not accept.
- Be patient and expect mistakes but correct your child kindly. Not using good manners is no different than breaking any other rule you have set.
- Expect good manners everywhere – at home, at child care, and at other people’s homes.
- Be a good role model. Your child learns how to act by watching and listening to you!
- Praise your child when they begin to use good manners without reminders from you or other people.

Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at www.extension.msu.edu.

Extension Extras (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

Extension Extras Enrichment Kits (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children's books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

Early Childhood Videos (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include "Perspective Taking," "Family Movies," "Goals of Misbehavior," "Using Thinking and Feeling Words," "The Waiting Game," and "When Siblings Fight."

Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children (<https://bit.ly/38XW4Kl>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

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