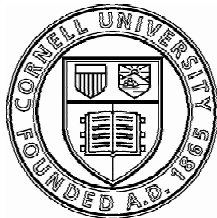




Parent Guide:

# Raising Responsible Children



Cornell University  
Cooperative Extension  
Jefferson County

New York State Parental Information & Resource Center  
Families and Communities Together with Schools  
(315) 788-8450

[www.nyspirc.org](http://www.nyspirc.org)

# Raising Responsible Children

## What are your goals as a parent?

Many parents say their main goal is to help their children become responsible adults. Adults need skills to be productive, healthy, and able to take care of themselves.



When parents teach children to be responsible at an early age, children gain the skills needed to be a responsible adult.

## What does responsibility mean for children?

- Taking care of self
- Taking care of personal items
- Doing chores
- Focusing on schoolwork
- Forming good relationships with family and friends
- Keeping track of time and money
- Helping the community

**As children grow older, their responsibilities should increase.**

# Tips for Raising Responsible Children

## 1. Don't do things for your children that they can do for themselves.

- **Start early**—Even young children can help with chores, getting dressed in the morning, etc.
- When you let children do things for themselves, it makes them feel confident and important.
- Resist the urge to take over and solve all your child's problems. Instead, help children learn to help themselves.



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## 2. Be clear and consistent about your expectations.

- Make sure your children understand the rules of the household.
- Be consistent with your messages. If the rule is that children must finish homework before watching TV, then stick with it.
- Give children advance notice if you expect certain behavior.

**Example**— *"When we go into the grocery store, I need you to walk next to the cart and help me shop."*

**Children do best when they know what to expect.**

### 3. Teach skills and give positive feedback.

- Don't just tell your child what to do —tell her **HOW** to do it.
- For young children, give simple one or two-step directions.



**Examples—** *"Put your blocks in the box. Then close the lid."*

*"Put on your coat. Then put on your mittens."*

- For older children, it may help to write down step by step directions.

**Example—** *Write down the steps involved in cleaning a bathroom.*

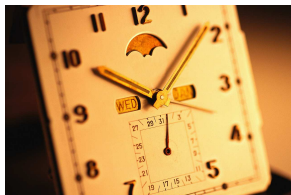
- When children do something well, give positive and specific feedback.

**Example—** *"I love the way you folded your clothes neatly before putting them in the drawer."*

**Letting children know when they do well encourages responsible behavior.**

#### 4. Create a home that helps children act responsibly.

- Work with your children to organize toys and other items. Provide bins and shelves that are within reach.
- Make sure your children know where to find cleaning supplies and other tools they need to do chores and clean up spills.
- Set up an area for homework that is away from the TV and other distractions. Make a “homework kit” that includes pens, pencils, and paper.
- If the routine isn’t working, change it!



**Example**—*When your child can’t get ready for school on time, set the alarm clock 15 minutes earlier.*

- Display lists and calendars where children can see them, such as on the refrigerator.

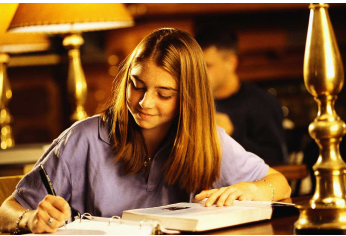
**Example**—*Make a “chore chart” so children can remember their responsibilities. Children will enjoy checking off the tasks they have completed.*

**Remember—you are in charge of your home.**

## 5. Teach children that mistakes are an opportunity to learn.

- Everybody makes mistakes, so your children probably will too. Try not to panic!

**Instead, view mistakes as a time to make a new plan.**



**Example**— *"You got a low grade on your test. What will you change to help you do better next time?"*

## 6. Let children experience the natural consequences of their behavior.

- When children don't act responsibly, don't be a "helicopter" parent who always rushes in to fix the mistake.
- Instead, let children experience the results of their actions. This is how they learn to be responsible for their behavior.

**Examples**—*If your child is careless and breaks a favorite toy, don't replace it. If your child tracks mud on the kitchen floor, he has to clean it up.*

*If your teen doesn't do her weekly chores, she can't go to her friend's house on Saturday.*

**Remember, when children "choose" their behavior, they are also choosing the consequences.**

## 7. Be a positive role model.

- Speak positively about your work and chores. Don't complain about all that you have to do. Instead, take pride in the things you do well.
- If you make a mistake, admit it—and then show children how you will correct it.
- Handle your emotions. Instead of losing your temper, take a minute to calm down and then explain why you are upset.
- **You are your child's first teacher. Your children learn how to behave from your example.**

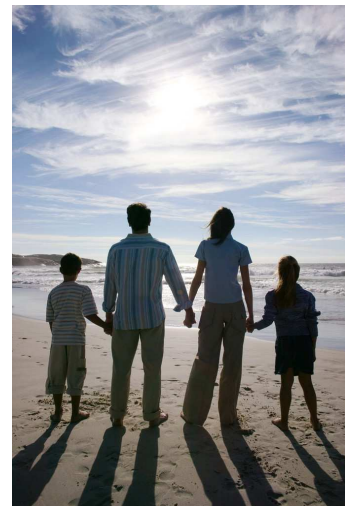


## Responsibility Matters

When you teach your children about responsibility, you are also teaching them about your family's values.

Some of these values might be:

- Honesty
- Strong work ethic
- Caring for others
- Fairness
- Self-respect
- Being a good citizen



**Remember**—If you start teaching children about responsibility when they are young, they are more likely to succeed in school and in life.

## Resources

This guide was created with information from the following resources:

- Nancy Olsen-Harbich, Human Development Specialist, *Raising Responsible Children*, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, New York.
- U.S. Department of Education Office of Communications and Outreach, *Helping Your Child Become a Responsible Citizen*, Washington, D.C., 2005.

You can download this resource at <http://www.ed.gov/parents>.



# New York State PIRC

## What is a PIRC?

**Parental Information and Resource Centers (PIRC)** are funded by the U.S. Department of Education and are located in every state.

PIRC programs help meet the academic needs of children by helping to implement parental involvement policies, programs, and activities that:

- strengthen partnerships between parents and schools.
- improve student academic achievement.
- help parents understand No Child Left Behind.

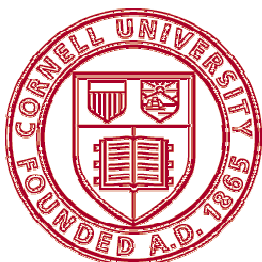
**There are two PIRC programs in New York State. For more information, contact:**

<b>Families and Communities Together with Schools (FACTS)</b> , sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County  <b>315-788-8450</b>	<b>Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)</b>  <b>716-332-4100</b>
<b>Visit the New York State PIRC website at <a href="http://www.nyspirc.org">www.nyspirc.org</a></b>	

# Notes

## Notes

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