



Why Manners Matter

Manners are about more than saying please and thank you. They help children make friends, show respect, and feel part of a group. Studies show that children who think about other people's feelings have stronger bonds in life. These skills start forming early.

Learning manners: how young children grow in kindness

Manners are hard to learn. Teaching manners to a young child takes time and patience. Learning manners means a child understands the rules in their home and community. It also requires that children think about how someone else feels. These skills are still developing in the preschool years. If your child does not have good manners, it does not mean they are rude or bad. They are still learning. With gentle, steady support, manners will improve. Daily moments at home are where children learn best.

Children learn by watching

One of the best ways children learn manners is by watching the adults around them. How adults speak and act with each other is the most powerful lesson. Children notice when adults say thank you, greet people, or ask for things kindly. They notice all of it. Even small things matter. Saying please when asking a child to do something is a great example. So is waiting for them to finish talking before jumping in.

Give children the "why"

Young children follow rules more easily when they know the reason behind them. Keep explanations simple:

- "When we say thank you, it makes people feel good."
- "Looking at someone when they talk lets them know you are listening."
- "Saying hello back lets people know you are friendly."

These short reasons connect manners to the feelings behind them.



ZERO TO THREE
Early connections last a lifetime



Make expectations clear and simple

General reminders are hard to follow. Prepare your child ahead of time so they know what to expect in a specific situation. Before a visit with a friend, you might say, "It's nice to say hello and ask if they want to play. How do you want to say hello today?" This gives children a chance to take part rather than just follow a rule.

It also helps to share your family's values in simple words. "In our family, we always try to be kind. That is why I opened the door for the mom carrying her baby." Children feel proud to be part of something bigger than themselves.

Make it fun

Pretend play is one of the best ways for young children to practice manners. Set up a pretend restaurant, a birthday party, or a grocery store. Try out moments that give your child many chances to use manners. Children pick up these habits when they are playing. They are more likely to use them in real life, too.

Have patience

Manners take years to learn. Children will forget, push back, and need reminders. That is all part of normal learning. Gentle, steady modeling and simple talks about "why" make the biggest difference over time.

Have more questions? Talk to your child's healthcare provider or one of the professionals supporting your family.

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