

Making and Enforcing Rules

The following ideas can help you make and enforce rules for your family.

- Think about your personal and family values. What kind of person do you want your child to be?
- Set rules that are easy to understand. The rules should be easy to enforce.
- Everyone in the family should have to follow the rules. Don't make rules only for the children or only one child. Of course, parents will have certain rights that children don't have such as driving the car or having wine with dinner.
- Decide ahead of time what the penalty will be if a rule is broken. The penalty should relate to the misbehavior itself.
- Be consistent. Do not let one child break a rule with no penalty, but another child breaks the same rule and has a penalty.
- Decide if the rules are:
 - Open to discussion. This is called negotiable. These rules teach children to think and to be responsible. They must be based on your child's skill and maturity level. They focus on things like money, grades, chores, clothing, sports, social manners and family needs.
 - Not open for discussion. This is called non-negotiable. They teach children to obey the rules. These rules focus on issues like safety, health, laws and religious observances.
- Young children should have only a few rules to follow. As they get older, they can handle more rules.
- The goal is to have your children feel like they are ruled from within. You don't want them to feel that the rules are forced on them.



ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.