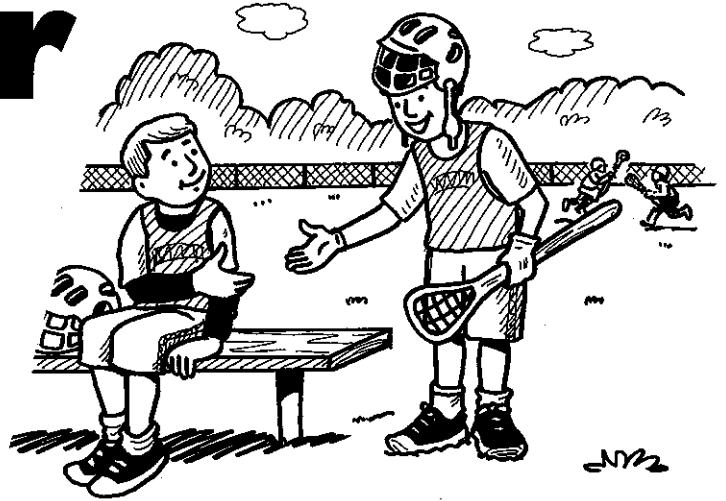


# Count on Good Character

Your child's everyday behavior and decisions help shape his character. Encourage him to make good choices that build positive character traits with these ideas.



## Respect

Guide your youngster to better understand what it means to treat others with respect.

### Listen without interrupting

When your child talks, he wants other people to listen. Explain that this is a sign of respect and that when he listens to others politely, he shows respect, too. If it's hard for him not to jump in during conversations, suggest that he tightly close his lips and focus on what the person is saying. Agree on a hand sign to give him as a reminder, like an L (for "listen")—with your thumb out and other fingers up.

### Celebrate diversity

Learning about cultures can help your youngster appreciate others' traditions and beliefs. Expose her to diversity by reading books and watching shows with characters from different backgrounds. Explore neighborhoods in your city, try ethnic foods, and attend cultural events at libraries, museums, or art galleries. *Idea:* Help her learn to say hello and good-bye in languages used by classmates or neighbors. Greeting people this way shows your child that "her way" isn't the only way—and it will show respect for their backgrounds.



## Responsibility

Help your youngster see how it feels to be accountable for one's actions.

### Take charge of chores

One way to help your child build responsibility—and help her feel grown-up at the same time—is to give her chores.

Children this age can make their beds, set the table, vacuum, and do other things around the house. Keep in mind that your youngster's covers may not be perfectly straight and someone might be missing a fork, but she's learning anyway!

### Go by the clock

Make your child responsible for being on time with this activity. Have him draw paper clocks with the time he needs to leave for school, choir practice, or a soccer game. He can post them next to a clock in the kitchen or by his bed. Then, he should get ready as the real time approaches the time he has drawn. Or suggest that he set an alarm for 10 or 20 minutes before he needs to be ready—then he is in charge of getting himself out the door on time.



## Kindness

When you're kind to someone else, it doesn't just make that person feel good—it makes you feel good, too.

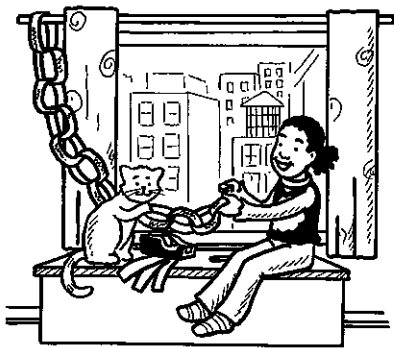
### Make a friend

Encourage your youngster to be friendly to classmates or teammates who seem lonely or don't have many friends. He might sit next to the child at lunch or strike up a conversation after practice. If he wonders how to approach someone like this, you can practice together. He could ask the youngster about his favorite school subject, sport, video game, or action figures—once they find something in common, conversation will be easier.

*continued*

## Build a kindness chain

Suggest that your child decorate her room with acts of kindness!



First, have her cut a few sheets of construction paper into strips. Then, each time she does something kind, she could write about it on a strip and tape or staple it into a link. (Examples: Called Aunt Sybil just to say hello. Let a friend go first in a game.) This will

inspire her to look for opportunities to be kind so she can add more links to her chain.

## Honesty

Honesty isn't just about telling the truth, it's also about being trustworthy and sincere.

### Be a reporter

Your youngster could gather stories from relatives and friends about what it means to be honest. Start by sharing one of your own examples—maybe an online retailer sent you two copies of a book by mistake, and you returned the extra one. Then, have her interview other people about times they were honest. She can write up and illustrate the stories and make a book to show to the people she interviewed.

### Notice actions

When you're watching television or reading books together, talk about the characters' actions. You might ask questions like, "Why do you think it was hard for her to tell the truth?" or "What would you have done differently in that situation?" By bringing up the topic, you will guide your child toward thinking more about his own actions and how he can be honest and trustworthy.

## Cooperation

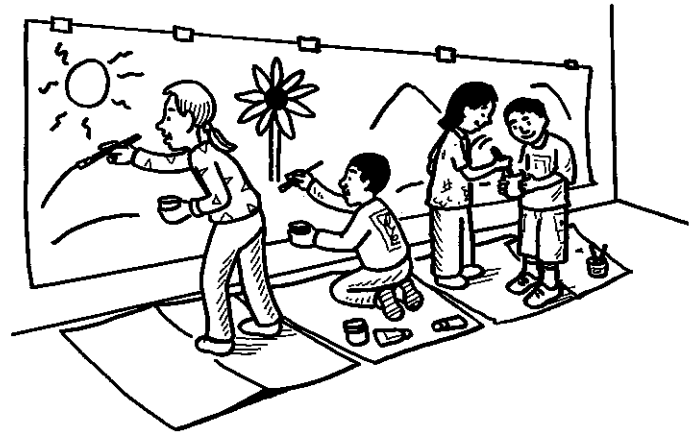
Working with others to accomplish something is what cooperation is all about.

### Dine on teamwork

Discuss how making dinner would be simpler—and save time all around—if everyone pitched in. On a whiteboard or sheet of paper, write down your dinner menu, and divide up the tasks. For instance, your youngster might make a salad while you prepare the chicken, and later your spouse can load the dishwasher. Together, decide on a menu of dinners for the week. Have your child write down what part he'll do for each meal.

### Create a mural

Doing a project with others allows your youngster to understand how working together benefits the group. Let her invite a few friends over to make a mural. They could



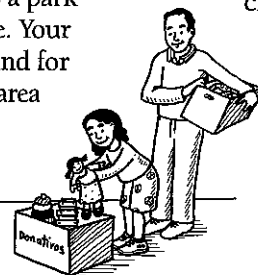
decide on a theme and lay out paper on a driveway or hang it on a basement or garage wall. Then, they can each select an area to paint. *Idea:* Suggest that each child use a different material (watercolors, markers, acrylic paint). They'll see how a variety of materials, techniques, and people can work together to create a great picture!

## Family community service

Develop good character traits in your youngster—and help her see the good in doing good—by getting involved in community service projects together. Consider these suggestions.

● **Attend a cleanup day.** Cleaning up a park or playground can send a powerful message. Your child will understand respect for property and for the earth as she clears litter and makes the area nicer for everyone to enjoy.

● **Donate items.** Ask your youngster to go through her clothes and toys for items to donate to a homeless shelter, a veterans group, or an organization like Value Village



or Goodwill. She'll learn about charity and compassion as she thinks about what others could use.

● **Visit a senior center.** Young children can do a lot to cheer up lonely seniors. Encourage your kids to show caring, friendliness, and courtesy as they visit with residents, read books to them, or even perform magic tricks or play the piano. Call local senior centers to see when they would welcome a visit.

*Note:* To find other community service opportunities, check with your child's school, your house of worship, or local organizations like the YMCA or Red Cross. Or look online at [unitedway.org](http://unitedway.org) and [volunteermatch.org](http://volunteermatch.org).

## Home & School CONNECTION®

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