



A mother crab and her son went scurrying over the sand. The mother chastised her child: "Stop walking sideways! It's much more becoming to stroll straightforward." And the young crab replied: "I will, Mother dear, just as soon as I see how. Show me the straight way, and I'll walk in it behind you."

-- Aesop

Help for parents!

- Check out the [Just for Kids](#) pages on this website.
- [Click here](#) for more resources for families about character
- [Click here](#) for tips on presenting this month's character quality to your children.

"The foundations of national morality must be laid in private families."

-- John Adams



Ways to reward good character at home

- Be specific
- Give character awards at dinner
- Let siblings put a character award for each in a bowl to be read at mealtime.
- Let siblings draw pictures or someone showing good character

Praising Character vs. achievement

Siblings will be jealous if one is praised for achievements and talent. Praising for character motivates siblings to work on it themselves.

Everyone has equal ability to build good character!

Compare:

- (achievement)

"You made great grades this year!"

- (character)

"You were so diligent this year with your homework!"

- (achievement)

"Way to go! You played a great game tonight!"

- (character)

"You showed such perseverance and deference in your teamwork tonight. Thank you for thinking of your team members first and playing hard when you felt like giving up!"



Building Character in Your Children

Much like the wood carver working on a carving, parents are shaping the habits of their children daily. A wood carver knows exactly which pieces of wood need to be chiseled out of the block of wood to achieve the desired shape. In the same way, parents chisel out undesired behavior in their children at a young age and help them develop good habits that form beautiful character within. **Children left to themselves will never know what is right until they see it demonstrated and taught.**

To create a masterpiece, parents must have a plan to form character in their children's lives.

- First, they must learn to hold character in high esteem themselves.
- They must **build and model character** in their own lives.
- When they fail, they must ask forgiveness of their children.

Second, they must develop a "culture" of character in their homes.

- Character qualities should be a regular topic of conversation. One might hear comments such as: "Did you notice how honest Jason was when he returned that dollar bill to the girl that dropped it?" or "Samuel sure was diligent in helping his dad clean up the yard!"
- Meal times are a good time to ask about character observations from the day and to positively affirm the children for good character in action during the day. Siblings can even be encouraged to award each other for good character shown during the day.
- Posters and books about character should be displayed and available in the home.
- Punishment and reward should be based on character.

Some families choose to **study** a different **character quality** each month, using the character materials available through this website and other **resources**.

- The children can role play the quality and its negative opposite.
- The family can study the **animal analogy** and historical figure that exemplifies the quality.
- Children can memorize the "I will" statements, character definition, and rhythmic poem about the character quality.
- Children can enjoy the fun work sheets on the quality of the month on the "[Just for Kids](#)" pages on this website.
- Children can enjoy the Character First website that presents the character qualities with stories, songs, and games. (See <http://classroom.characterfirst.com>)

Parents should **evaluate the influences** in their children's lives by the grid of good character and replace any bad examples with ones modeling and teaching good character. Asking the question, "Is this object, activity, or person demonstrating the kind of character I want my children to have?" will often result in parents realizing the need to change the entertainment, activities, and peer influences in the home.

Parents can begin to **punish and reward their children for character**, rather than for failures or accomplishments.

- When one child in a family is praised for accomplishments or talents, the other children can become discouraged.
- Not all children are equally talented, but all children have an equal ability to develop good character.
- Discipline should always be done in love, not anger. The lack of a particular character quality causing the bad behavior should be discussed with the child.

Parents will want to determine which character qualities need to be encouraged in their children's lives. **Most wrong behavior can be linked to a missing character quality.** For instance--

- Angela, who is constantly putting down a sibling, is lacking in respect.
- Jimmy, who is constantly getting sent to the principle's office, is likely lacking in obedience and respect.
- Sally, who is whining and complaining anytime she has to wait her turn for something, is lacking in patience.
- Johnny, who doesn't put away his toys now because he lacks responsibility, won't put his tools away when he is older because he still lacks responsibility. And he may lose his job because of it!

A child who is taught character at a young age will reap rewards of success in adult life.

When needed qualities are identified, then **deliberate action and training** should take place in the child's daily home activities. For instance, when doing the dishes, the child can be taught that doing that chore is a way to show gratefulness to the mom for cooking dinner. Or, thoroughness can be taught with statements such as, "Tonight as we do the dishes we are going to do a thorough job and make sure we don't miss one single spot of food on these dishes." Doing chores can also highlight character qualities such as orderliness, diligence, responsibility and carefulness.

Finally, the most powerful tool in chiseling character into a person's life is that of **proper praise**. Wrong praise brings pride and limits the further development of a person's talents. Parents tend to praise their children for knowledge, beauty, accomplishment, talent or position. However, when a parent praises a child for a character quality, he or she is encouraging the child to develop more of that quality, which will then cause the child to make the most of the talents and abilities the child has. **Proper praise does much more to develop long term benefits when it is given for good character.**

Why not choose to **become a character family**?

Homes are not meant to be battlegrounds, but places where families truly enjoy and care for one another. It is character that creates that kind of environment. When the pressures of life and the weakness of human nature surface in the home, character will keep harmony and ensure that healthy relationships will continue for a lifetime of happy and productive family life.



"The early experiences of home become a moral compass point, guiding and instructing us for the rest of life's journey."

-- Wm. J. Bennett