Parents - If you haven't already read the pages on "Developing Character in Your Children," you might want to go there first before reading these pages.

Plan a Party!

Why not plan a party or special meal to practice good use of time?

-Help the children list the steps needed to make it happen.
-Make a calendar showing when each step should be completed.
-Help the children with reminders and praise to accomplish, or help you accomplish, each step.
-Celebrate the teamwork and punctuality the children showed openly at the party.

Punctuality
vs. Tardiness

"Showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time."

Teaching Your Children to be Punctual

Punctuality is a habit that children learn to develop, although some are more prone to distractions and inattentiveness than others. The core value that we all need to understanding in developing punctuality is respect for others and for their time.

As with any character quality, praise and reward is the strongest means to encourage punctuality. Setting deadlines for completion of chores and homework, encouraging the children to break their assignments into smaller chunks and to begin work on those smaller pieces early, and praising them for meeting the deadlines along the way will raise their awareness of the need for punctuality. Discuss their activities for the day or week and help them prioritize and recognize distractions.

Discuss an upcoming activity and list the preparations (with deadlines) that will be needed to be ready for it (homework done? equipment and clothing gathered? chores finished?). Encourage them to be ready in advance, perhaps even in the car and waiting for the rest of the family.

Children can learn to understand their part in helping a family function smoothly with punctuality and even lend a hand by helping a younger sibling be ready on time for an activity.

Pony Express Game

(Describe the punctuality of the Pony Express to the children.)

Divide the children into two teams and then divide each team into "runners" and "distractors." Be sure each team has the same number of "runners" (4 or more).

This will be a relay race, back and forth from one point to the other. The winner is the first team to complete the relay race.

Place a cone at the beginning and ending point (the distance is at your discretion.)

Place half of the "distractors" from each team at both end points. They will try to distract the opposite team's runners as they hand off the mail to the next runner. (No physical contact or blocking the runner is allowed.)

Give each team a piece of mail (a letter?) to carry. Have the runners begin from the same starting point, run to the ending point, hand off the mail to another runner, who will run back to the starting point, and again hand off the mail to another runner.

If a team "distracts" in an illegal manner, his runner has to take a 5-second time out.

Some suggestions~

1. Get or make a family weekly planning calendar in poster form and put bright stickers on it for activities. Draw a clock by each so the children will know when they need to be ready for each activity. You might want to list what they will need to gather or do before they are considered ready. Later, put a happy face by the activities in which they have shown punctuality. Perhaps the first one to be ready can be given a special privilege.

2. Help children take an upcoming task and develop steps to completion, prioritize the steps, set intermediate time deadlines, and identify possible distractions.

3. Visit a fire station with the children and have them find out what the firemen have to do to be ready to leave immediately when there is a fire alarm. Discuss why punctuality is so important for firemen.

4. Develop a warning system (a funny sound, perhaps?) when you see a child getting distracted from a task.

5. Use a jar and token system to reward punctuality and punish tardiness or distractedness. Let the children use the tokens to "buy" special privileges at the end of the week.