Seven Habits of Highly Responsible Students

To the three R's taught in school, many families and teachers would like to add a fourth R—Responsibility. They know that responsible students usually grow up to be responsible adults.

Responsible students don't have any one secret for their success—but they do practice some habits that help them. Inside, find the seven habits that help highly responsible students achieve in school.

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1. They set goals.

Goals keep students focused on the future. That's why they are the foundation of responsible behavior—and success in school.

Help your child set goals. Ask your child:

- **How much** improvement would you like to see on this week's test?
- **How would** you like to improve your grades this marking period?
- **What are** two things you would like to accomplish this school year?
- **What will be** needed to meet those goals?

Goals help students focus on what's important and what's not. If they have a vision of where they want to go, they're more likely to get there. And students with goals find it easier to say *no* to irresponsible behaviors … because they are saying *yes* to their vision of the future.

2. They plan their time.

Responsible people meet their obligations—whether it's turning in a paper on the day it's due or having a report on the boss's desk when it's needed. But it takes planning. (Remember the old saying: "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.")

Help your child use a big calendar to write down commitments and use the calendar to plan time for schoolwork each day. On a day when there's soccer after school, your child will need to study after dinner—but the next day, if there's a scouts meeting in the evening, your child will need to study right after school.

3. They study every day.

Learning any subject is like building a brick wall—you do it steadily, one step at a time. Responsible students set aside time for schoolwork or studying every day.

On days when the teacher doesn't give any assignments, your child might review vocabulary words or take a few minutes to review notes.

4. They take notes in class.

Students who earn all A's seem to have one thing in common—they take notes in class. They have learned that teachers will almost always spell out what they think is important (and what's likely to be on the test).

Teach your child to take notes during class, spend time reviewing them before a test—and watch grades go up.

5. They have the tools they need.

A carpenter wouldn't think of showing up without a hammer. A nurse always has a stethoscope. But some students seem to think they can go to class without the pencils, paper and other tools they need.

6. They keep their commitments.

Responsible people honor their commitments—to others and to themselves. They succeed in school by doing their assignments well and on time. They do their share of the group project. They go to soccer practice even when it's cold.

You can teach your child about commitments by setting an example. Also talk about the commitments you have made to the family—to provide food and clothing, to care for anyone who is sick. Ask your child to make commitments at home, too. And help your child feel the satisfaction that comes from meeting those commitments.

7. They get ready ahead of time.

Some students start out every morning in a crisis. They can't find their schoolbag. They don't have time to eat breakfast. The shirt they want to wear isn't clean. Responsible students have learned that being late, or being early, is not something that simply happens to them. It is a choice they can make.

Teach your child to take five or 10 minutes before bedtime to get ready for the next day. Have your child make lunch and lay out clothes. Your child will soon see that those few minutes will make the morning easier—and help your child get to school ready to learn.

Is Your Child Becoming a Responsible Student?

After practicing the seven habits of responsible students for two weeks, encourage your child to take this quiz. Your child can answer *yes* or *no* to each of the questions below.

1. I set goals and work toward them.
2. I plan ahead and manage my time wisely.
3. I spend some time studying every day.
4. I take notes in class and use them to study.
5. In class, I always have the materials I need.
6. Others can count on me to do what I say I will do.
7. Mornings usually go smoothly, and I get to school on time.

How did your child do?

Each *yes* answer means your child is becoming a responsible student. For each *no* answer, have your child try some of the suggestions in the quiz.

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