

Don't Procrastinate: Teach Your Kids Time Management Skills

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Most parents want their children to know essential habits like managing money, work habits, how to learn and study, communication skills and correct hygiene. But, have you considered helping them manage their time better?

To be fair, that's probably something most of us haven't thought about. However, according to a study from the University of Pennsylvania, self-discipline – which happens to be the cornerstone of time management – is a better predictor of adolescents' academic performance than IQ.

How can you teach your kids these basic time-management skills? Here are ten ways to accomplish that feat with some ideas that will stick throughout life.

The sooner, the better.

It's never too late to improve time management skills. In fact, I believe that this is an area where there's always room for improvement. But, why delay this until they get older?

It may seem like over-parenting, but you can begin teaching basic time management skills to toddlers. Preschoolers are even capable of completing small tasks in short time blocks, such as brushing their teeth or putting away their toys.

Establish a routine and stick to it.

“Regular schedules provide the day with a structure that orders a young child’s world,” explains Robert Myers, Ph.D. “Although predictability can be tiresome for adults, children thrive on repetition and routine.” In fact, from the first days of life, schedules are formed. “Babies, especially, need regular sleep and meal programs and even routines leading up to those activities,” adds Dr. Myers.

As your children get older, however, you’ll want to help them establish a daily routine. The reason? It lets them know “what is going to happen and who is going to be there, it allows them to think and feel more independently, and feel more safe and secure,” says Dr. Myers. “A disrupted routine can set a child off and cause them to feel insecure and irritable.”

In addition to some much-needed structure, this can help them become more accountable. And it gives you the opportunity to spend quality time with them.

Some obvious places to start setting simple time goals would be:

- A morning routine, like eating breakfast and getting ready for school.
- An after school routine, such as chores and homework.
- An evening routine that could include dinner, brushing their teeth and reading before bed.

For younger children, you may need to give them a little more assistance by creating charts with them or using timers and providing rewards. For older children, most of these goals will become a habit. If your child has a phone, they could use calendar apps like First-Then Visual Schedule, myHomework App,

or Remember the Milk.

Have them make their own calendars.

Whether if it's a DIY, old paper calendar, or an app like Cozi, get them involved in the calendar creating process. As a family, list your commitments and add them to the calendar. To prevent any confusion, use color-coding so that everyone has their own color for their own schedule. Most importantly, keep this in a location that's easy to access and review.

In addition to a family calendar, have your kids construct their own individual calendars. Because this is their own personal calendar, it can be more in-depth than the family calendar. You will be amazed how much even young children like to control their own calendar. The child can help determine what activities should be added and those that can be left off.

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Set priorities.

"It's essential kids learn to differentiate between 'have-tos' and 'want-tos' and learn to prioritize and self-monitor," Marcia Grosswald, an upper-elementary resource teacher, told Scholastic. Grosswald uses the popular rock, pebble and water analogy, where students' duties are represented by the rocks and pebbles.

The rocks, however, signify their most essential tasks, like school and sleep. The pebbles represent extracurricular commitments. And, the water stands in for want-to-dos, such as hanging out with friends.

"I use a jar to represent a day," says Grosswald. "The rocks go in first because they are things you have to do whether you

like it or not. Next, come the pebbles. But there's still some room in the jar, so we pour water until our jar – and the day is full."

Personally, this could be an activity that we parents use to help us determine what our priorities are.

Help them measure time.

"In order to make a realistic schedule, you need a good sense of how long things take," says Grosswald. "I give them a chart that breaks the afternoon and evening hours into 15-minute intervals," she explains. "Each time slot is followed by three columns: what kids plans to do, what they actually did and reflection."

Grosswald states that the reflection piece is essential. The reason? By reassessing how they're spending their time gives them the chance to adjust their schedule accordingly.

Make it fun.

As an adult, it's hard to imagine how something like time management can be fun. But, it is possible by making it a game. Heck, you may even use gamification yourself to boost your productivity.

As for kids, I suggest you explore the Timex Time Machines app. In a partnership with Scholastic, there are interactive games, lesson plans and activities to teach children in Grades 1 through 3 core time-telling concepts.

There are also DIY activities you can do together as a family. For example, you could have them construct their own hourglass and then use it as a stopwatch. Clockify has some other suggestions, like "What I did yesterday?" and "Colored blocks."

Stop being a helicopter parent.

Obviously, you want to protect and help your children as much as possible. At the same time, you should also give them a chance to spread their wings.

Let's say that they just started a new school year. Because they have a new routine and teacher, which means new expectations and rules, they may be anxious. Instead of telling them how to handle this situation, let them voice their concerns and develop solutions to this problem.

When they're older, let them create their own routine, and let them be flexible with their schedules so that they have free time. Your role, then, would be to coach and reward them as opposed to dictating every minute of their time.

Don't over-schedule your kids.

What happens when you overcommit and pack your calendar too tightly? You probably feel like you're always on the go. More troublesome, you may feel like you're always behind. And, you don't have the wiggle room to address the unexpected.

It's the same thing with kids. They also require downtime for solo play or to wind down at the end of the day.

Designate a study zone.

If you've ever worked from home, then you know how important it is to have a dedicated workspace. I'd even go as far as to say that this should be a top priority when it comes to time management.

The reason? It lets you block out distractions like the TV or noisy family members, and it helps you distinguish between your work and personal lives.

The same idea is true when it comes to children. They should have a designated study area that's quiet and free of distractions so that they can focus on their homework.

You can also begin to stress the importance of keeping their area clean and organized. For instance, you can show them organizing systems such as paper flow (a tried and tested system to handle paper), and mise-en-place (a tried and tested "everything in its place" cooking system).

Be a role model.

Finally, the best way to help your kids get a better grasp of time management is to set a good example. As psychologist Eileen Kennedy-Moore explains, "Good modeling doesn't guarantee that children will do what we want them to do, but telling children 'do as I say, not as I do' definitely won't work."

You'll want to keep your own goals under control, meaning that if you've been emphasizing the importance of a schedule, and you're failing at time management, they'll pick-up on this inauthenticity.

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