

Tips Sheet: Family agreements and rules

Family agreements are positive statements that guide us in how we treat each other and behave in our family so that everyone feels safe, happy and cared for. Family agreements include procedures, tasks and rules that are agreed upon by the whole family to make sure everyone is treated fairly and with respect.

Family agreements and rules are important because:

- They help your kids feel safe and secure and keep your family life more peaceful.
- They help you establish order if you and/or your partner need to work from home or if you have other family members staying with you.
- They include rules and consequences that are agreed upon by everyone in the family, so everyone is more likely to adhere to them.
- They support the development of family values, so your children have a basis for making good decisions and choices in their life going forward.

Top Tips:

1. **Consult the kids:** It is important to involve each and every member of the family while establishing your family agreements.
2. **Keep it simple:** Set some ground rules that are easy to follow and apply to everyone.
3. **Consider the age of your children:** If you have a range of ages in your house, not all rules will be the same. In addition to the ground rules set some situation agreements that apply to each age group.
4. **Remind them of the rules:** Your children may not always remember the rules and may make mistakes especially if your child is quite young. They are learning so regularly and gently remind them of the rules.
5. **Set consequences with your children:** Whether it be withdrawal of privileges, time out or whatever you all feel is best, consequences that are agreed upon by you and your children are more likely to be effective. Plus, you can say “Well, we all agreed on the consequences”
6. **Positive reinforcement:** Make sure you watch out for your kids doing the right thing by following the rules. Be generous with your praise and reward for your kids when they follow the rules.

Examples of Ground Rules - We all agree to:

1. Be kind to each other
2. Be fair to everyone
3. Play by the rules
4. Speak nicely to each other
5. Think about each other's feelings
6. Treat each other how we like to be treated

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Agreements

You can start to make agreements with your children from a relatively early age to start to build their sense of responsibility and self-management. Agreements are made in collaboration and with negotiation. For example, explaining to younger children that they can play with their toy's but they must put them away once they are finished.

As children get older these agreements should aim to support them to take on more responsibility. Agreements sound like - Okay, so you can have up to an hour of leisure screen time each day, but schoolwork needs to be completed and chores done each day. How would you like to do this?

Examples of agreements

- Beds made each day and room tidy before activities
- Screen time and technology use - Agreement on time spent online.
- Schoolwork completed before leisure screen time
- All Phones/devices on bench at bedtime
- Completion of chores before activities/screen time

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