

## **The Importance of Teaching Manners to Young Children**

By Jill Evans Kryston, Etiquette Consultant

**Q: I have two children, ages 3 and 1. Can you describe the importance of having good manners, the benefit of etiquette instruction, and the age at which training should begin?**

A: Good questions. As parents, we have an obligation to raise our children to become responsible and productive citizens. The lessons they learn early will become life skills just like reading, writing and arithmetic. Since we are not born with these skills, please, thank you and other common courtesies need to be taught and practiced in the home as soon as babies are responsive to our words and our actions. In order for these skills to become part of them, they need to be reinforced regularly throughout their informative years.

Manners shape character and are an integral part of success. Experts believe children who possess good manners are more apt to have better reading and listening skills, and overall academic success. It is further believed that good manners will help teens make wiser choices when they are faced with negative peer pressure because manners build confidence and increase self esteem. Practicing good manners takes the focus off “self” and generates respect and good will toward others. Being polite shows we care about one another and understand an individual’s self worth. Consequently, children can manage their school environment effectively: they will know how to resolve conflict and aggression without losing control.

Often parents feel frustrated because they think they are not getting their messages across to their children. This is not a reason to get discouraged and give up trying. Studies have shown individuals are more receptive to etiquette instruction when it comes from an outside source. It helps to reinforce the work of parents and teachers alike.

Research has also shown children are more receptive to learning manners when taught at a young age. The International School of Protocol in Baltimore has developed courses for children beginning at age 4. Their curriculum focuses on social etiquette, communication skills and table manners. I suggest you seek formal etiquette training when your child is able to read, possibly by age 4 or 5, and then progress to more advanced classes.

Codes of conduct are universal and manners are the great equalizer. Etiquette instruction is a small investment to make when compared with future rewards.

*Do you have an etiquette question you want Jill to answer in her monthly column? Visit: [www.DefiningManners.com](http://www.DefiningManners.com) and click “In the News” to submit your questions or mail to: P.O. Box 1703, Shavertown, PA 18708.*

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