

# Rules: What's Fair?



**For families to function harmoniously, they need rules. Rules and limits let everyone know what is expected of them. A set of rules that works in one family may not work in another. Setting rules about safety and family unity is important.**

It is NORMAL for parents to be upset when kids break rules. It is NORMAL for children to say, *"rules aren't fair because the parents always get to be the boss."* Children want choices. They want some control over their lives. And parents want and need to feel in control at home. So, what's fair when it comes to rules?

- **Rules about safety are needed.** Examples are: *"No playing in the street;"* or *"No biting your sister;"* or *"No playing with matches."* The major goal of safety rules is to keep kids from harm.

- **Rules about bedtime and mealtime are important.**

Kids need a regular routine. Children need adequate sleep to feel and be their best. Parents need time alone in the evening.

Kids need proper nutrition to thrive and grow. Parents and kids feel better when mealtimes are regular and pleasant. While it is vital to have limits and rules about bedtime and meal times, it's also important to give children some choices about bedtime and meals.

- **Rules having to do with respect and appreciation are important and fair.** Examples are, *"If you're going to be more than 15 minutes late, call home;"* *"Before you can spend the money Grandma sent you, you need to write her a thank you note."*

**The goal of setting limits when kids are young is for them to grow up learning self-discipline. As children grow older they are able to take more control over and responsibility for their lives.**

**Too many rules can lead to conflict between parents and children.** Parents have to *"pick"* the things which are important enough to have rules about. Examples of things that parents might want to *"let go of"* and let kids choose, include what to wear, whether to eat meat or veggies first, and how to style their hair.

**Children are more likely to follow rules if they help create the family rules.** Let them share in making decisions about things like bedtime, menus, television time and chores. Let them also help decide what will happen [consequences] if rules are broken.

**Discuss rules with your children. Hug and praise your children for helping you set and follow family rules.**