

# ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

**FAST FACTS**

**ASSET  
CATEGORY**

**Boundaries  
and  
Expectations**

*The more your child has clear, consistent boundaries and high expectations, the more likely he or she is to grow up healthy.*

**Youth  
Speak**

- "Expect me to be a good student and to do things right."
- "Help me grow to be an individual."
- "Challenge me to succeed and comfort me when I fail."



## Why Boundaries and Expectations Make a Difference

**S**earch Institute researchers found that young people have fewer boundaries as they get older.

While it's normal and healthy for teenagers to take more responsibility for themselves as

they grow, the problem is that not enough young people have clear boundaries in the first place. Positive peer influence is one boundary asset that can help youth make good decisions for themselves (see *6 Key Areas of Boundaries and Expectations* below). But while 87% of 6th graders report that their best friends model responsible behavior, only 52% of 12th graders do.

Boundaries are important to our children because they give clear messages about what's expected. Every day young people face many options and choices. Without boundaries to guide them, they may feel unsure and confused—and make unhealthy decisions. With boundaries, they have the supports that help them choose wisely and grow up healthy.

Expectations also make a difference in children's lives. Having teachers and parents who expect them to do their best is important for children. For example, research shows that regardless of ability level, young people's scholastic achievement tends to be higher in classes where teachers have high expectations. When parents and teachers set high, yet realistic, expectations, children strive to do well.

### 6 Key Areas of Boundaries and Expectations

Search Institute researchers have identified six assets in the area of boundaries and expectations that are crucial for helping young people grow up healthy. Check your family's areas of strength:

- Family boundaries*—Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- School boundaries*—School provides clear rules and consequences.
- Neighborhood boundaries*—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- Adult role models*—Parent(s) and other adults model responsible behavior.
- Positive peer influence*—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- High expectations*—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

**Watch the next six newsletters for more ideas on building boundaries-and-expectations assets!**

### Helpful Hints

- Tips that make boundaries easier:*
- *Discuss boundaries with teachers, coaches, employers, clergy, and adults in other places where your child goes so that all boundaries are consistent.*
  - *When you're unsure about setting and enforcing boundaries, seek advice from another parent or a teacher.*
  - *Involve your children in family meetings to discuss boundaries and what happens when boundaries are violated.*
  - *Think of boundaries as something positive rather than something negative!*

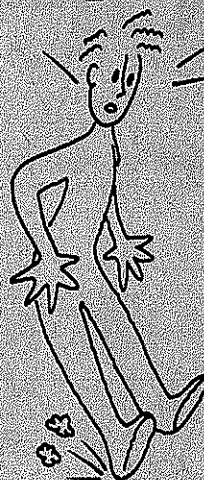
# Setting Limits through the Years

## Age Ways to Set and Uphold Boundaries for Your Child

- 0-1
  - Know that children at this age don't intentionally violate standards.
  - Distract your child from inappropriate behaviors and draw attention to appropriate ones.
- 2-3
  - Enforce boundaries consistently.
  - Give simple, understandable boundaries, such as "Don't bite" or "Be quiet."
  - Calmly repeat simple rules when children do not follow them.
- 4-5
  - Don't just tell your child what and what not to do. Demonstrate appropriate ways of behaving.
  - Learn to set limits and offer your child choices.
- 6-10
  - Be firm about safety boundaries.
  - Be consistent with the consequences for violating boundaries.
- 11-15
  - Negotiate new boundaries as your child grows older.
  - Be patient, calm, and consistent as young adolescents test the boundaries you set.
- 16-18
  - Explain your reasons for the limits you set.
  - Help your teenager think about future goals, and the discipline and boundaries required to reach them.

**Quick Tip:**  
Set clear boundaries  
and expect the best.

## The 4 Cs of Boundaries and Expectations



**Clear**—Everyone should know what to expect.

**Consistent**—Standards are more likely to be honored when you uphold them.

**Creative**—Kids respond better when boundaries are clever and creative.

**Confident**—Expectations empower when you say, "I know you can do this."

### More Help for Parents

**Setting Limits: How to Raise Responsible, Independent Children by Providing Clear Boundaries** by Robert J. MacKenzie. This book helps with the positive, respectful boundaries your child needs. (Published by Prima Publishing.)

## Final Word

**"The word *no* carries a lot more meaning when spoken by a parent who also knows how to say yes."**

—Joyce Maynard

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