

A Little Grace and Charm™

Telephone Tips for Youngsters

When it comes to teaching our children how to use the telephone, it's not only a matter of good manners and etiquette, they need to remember safety rules as well. Remind children of the 'stranger danger' cautions and warn them of the risks of giving out too much information to callers such as their name, whether or not their parents are home, etc. It is also vitally important that children understand how to call 911 and ONLY in emergencies.

At what age should a child begin answering the family telephone? A good rule of thumb is that children who can read and write are ready to answer the telephone. When they are first learning to answer the phone, 'cue cards' can be left near the telephone to help prompt them in remembering what to say. And while specific greetings and procedures will vary from one family to the next, there are some rules which apply to most:

- Before you pick up an incoming call, make sure there isn't too much background noise...you may want to turn down the TV or music.
- Always speak clearly when greeting the caller and wait for them to identify themselves. Expect them to say something like "Hello, this is Mrs. X, may I speak to your mother?". If they do not tell you who they are, you may ask by saying something like "Who's calling, please?"
- If the person for whom they are calling is unavailable, it is not necessary for you to tell them specific reasons why they cannot come to the phone. Simply say "I'm sorry, she is not available at the moment."
- If you can take a message, then offer to do so. Write a short message which includes who the message is FOR, who the message is FROM, and a phone number where they can be reached.
- If the person is available, never stand with the telephone in your hand and yell "Moom, telephone!". Instead, lay the phone down quietly and walk to where that person is. If you are leaving the phone, it's important that you say "One moment please" never "Yah, hang on".

Telephone Tips for Youngsters (cont'd)

Those dreaded telemarketing calls may finally have an upside! Children can use these unknown calls as opportunities to take messages, respond appropriately to callers on the phone, etc.

Placing outgoing calls should come next. Remind your children to always identify themselves when they call someone "Hello, Mrs. Johnson, this is Bobby. May I speak to Eric?" and to leave a similar message if they get an answering machine (don't just hang up) "This is Bobby, I was calling for Eric, my number is 555-1234."

Remember to provide your child with the tools they will need to master this new skill successfully. A small basket with pencils, note paper, and cue cards will help ensure that they are quickly answering the phone like a pro! Reward their success...perhaps a 'private' call to a distant relative or friend?

Use the telephone cue cards below to help prompt your child...use the ones which apply to your family, and fill in the blanks to create you own!

"I'm sorry, they are not available at the moment. May I take a message?"

"One moment, please"

"Who is calling, please?"

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