

# RULES FOR UNRULY CHILDREN

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Richard L. Munger

# Rules for Unruly Children

Published by Boys Town Press  
14100 Crawford St.  
Boys Town, NE 68010

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Boys Town Press is the publishing division of Girls and Boys Town,  
the original Father Flanagan's Boys' Home

## Also by Richard L. Munger

The Ecology of Troubled Children

Changing Children's Behavior Quickly

Child Mental Health Practice from the Ecological Perspective

Changing Children's Behavior by Changing the People, Places, and Activities in Their Lives

# Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Paul Rossman for the splendid illustrations in this book and to Elaine Marcus and Tom Bensman for their assistance with design and editing. My thanks also to Trent Hicks for the use of the *Daily Report Card* in Chapter 3.

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# Introduction For Parents

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Both younger children and adolescents need clear behavioral limits regarding what they can and cannot do. If you think children are happy with lots of freedom and control over you, then pay special attention! Professionals who study children all agree on this issue: children feel safe and loved within firm, fair behavioral boundaries. Testing those boundaries is the normal, healthy way children discover and learn about appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Therefore, testing limits is natural and good. If parents do not set clear limits, or if they enforce limits inconsistently, then something very important happens: children get anxious. It may or may not show on the surface, but the child, inside, becomes anxious, or unsettled, about having too much power and control in setting his or her own limits. Then what happens with all that anxiety? It usually stirs up the child into further acting out against and testing of limits. It causes the child to push more and more against what few limits there might be. This increasing “misbehavior” is how children deal with the anxiety of inconsistent, unclear, or too few limits on their behavior. You, as parents, must establish limits, and in doing so, you will create a safe, supportive environment for your children. It is only then, in my experience, that all the other things involved in bringing up children will work best. This book will guide you in setting basic limits, which is the first step toward humanistic child rearing.

This book is meant to help you change your child’s (or children’s) problem behaviors as quickly as possible, using simple techniques that will work with most children. Unfortunately, most approaches taught in workshops and books for parents are time-consuming and/or expensive, and they often require much effort to learn. Although many

of these approaches are excellent, I feel there is a great need for an alternative program that:

- Can be learned quickly—in this case, by reading a few chapters and completing some lists.
- Can be used immediately after it is learned; requires little practice.
- Gives quick results. When parents consult with a professional or a publication, they typically are emotionally at their “wits’ end”; they need to see success quickly for, if nothing else, their own mental condition. Also, in many cases, the child’s behavior is getting out of control and may be even dangerous.
- Works with most problem behaviors, even difficult ones that parents have not been able to change through timeouts, grounding, taking away privileges, or other methods.

This booklet has three chapters; chapters 1 and 2 help you set up a discipline program for children and teenagers ages 5 - 18. Chapter 3 is about school problems and how you can motivate your child toward better academic and behavioral adjustment in educational settings.

## Who the Booklet Is Not For?

If the discipline methods you use with your child *ordinarily* work, I suggest that you stick with them. The approach described in this book is meant for parents who are unsuccessful with their present discipline methods, or parents who are unhappy with their approach and want to change.

## Can This Booklet Help You?

The discipline and behavior change plans discussed in this booklet have been shown to be useful when learned in clinical settings, that is, with a professional counselor. In general, studies of self-help approaches such as this one have shown that about 50 per cent of people using programs on their own are helped. If you are not successful in following this program on your own, you should consider talking to a professional in your community, for example, your child's school guidance counselor.

## A Note About Language

I am in total sympathy with the view that women feel put down by the use of "he" in reference to a person in general. However, I find a "himself-herself" in the middle of a sentence to be disruptive. Until someone comes up with a set of gender-neutral pronouns, there is no good solution to the problem. Therefore, I have chosen to deal with the problem by making all general references in female terms in some instances, and in male terms in others, randomly alternating throughout the book.

# Chapter 1

# The Rule-Privilege Program

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I find that in about 80 per cent of the cases in which I consult with parents about discipline problems at home, the child has actually become the boss around the house; the child is controlling the parents. One purpose of this chapter is to put the power back where it belongs, in the hands of the parents, who are attempting to raise their children with all good intentions.

Many years of research on child development have shown that children need behavior limits. This program will help you set such limits for your child. As soon as you set those limits, they can be easily enforced through the use of this program. Quite simply, this program can enable you to be the boss in your own home again.

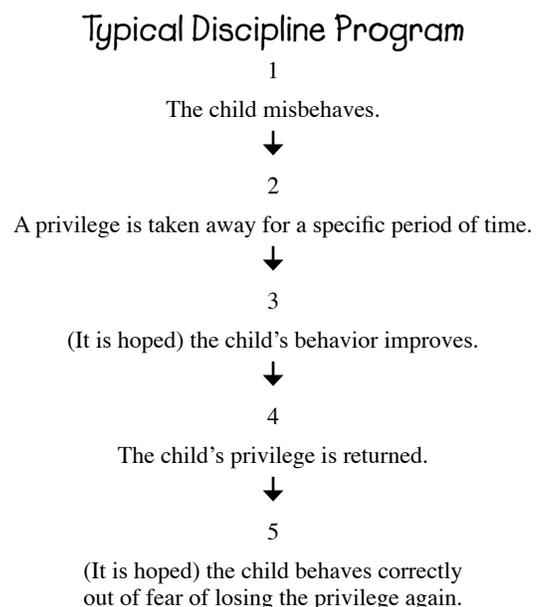
## Learning Good Behavior

This program is based on the idea that children learn to behave correctly. The word “learn” is emphasized because it is important. You may be upset because you think your child should know how to behave correctly. Although this is understandable—it is a common assumption—it is wrong: children do not instinctively know how to behave. At least for now, please follow me with a different assumption: *Children learn to behave correctly, specifically by seeing that good behavior is rewarded.*

Your child simply may need a more structured approach to help her learn that good behavior will earn rewards. This program structures your child’s life so that she knows what to expect as a consequence of her actions. It makes life more predictable for her. Only within this structure will discipline be consistent so that your child can learn to behave correctly. It is essential that you help her to learn good behavior. To do that, you need to give her rewards for good behavior.

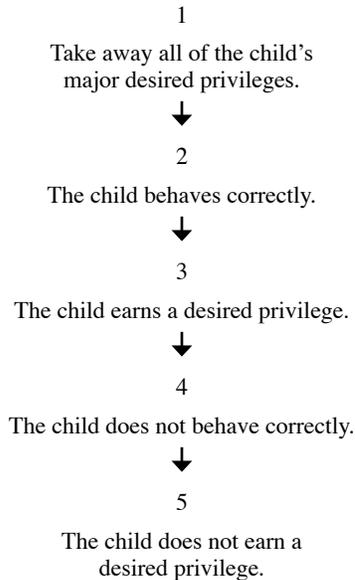
This program is for children and adolescents from about age 5 to age 18. It is a collection of techniques that are not new; I am simply putting them into a package that will help you, as parents, learn to use them more easily. You may already do many of the things in this booklet, but perhaps your methods need to be fine-tuned—perhaps you need to be more consistent with them. Perhaps you need to focus on making rules ahead of time instead of after the fact. These two points about the fine-tuning of disciplinary techniques will be discussed later.

Parents most often discipline their children by taking away some privilege when the child misbehaves. The privilege is usually something highly desired by the child, such as TV time, use of a bike, or freedom to leave the home for activities. An outline of this method would look like the diagram below:



This method works well with many children. But, again, you would not be reading this if such methods worked for you. The rule-privilege program is often effective when other approaches are failing. The idea is very simple. You might think of this program as being the opposite of the method just outlined. It looks like the diagram below:

### Rule-Privilege Discipline Program



The reason this approach is called a rule-privilege program is that the expected, appropriate behavior you want from the child is set out in the form of a rule. If she follows the rule, she earns the privilege; if she does not follow the rule, she does not get the privilege. Therefore, the program stresses rewards for good behavior. However, it is not like



Parents *must* be in control; not the child!

many reward programs, because the rewards are not extra goodies. Instead, they are the privileges the child was often getting free before the program began. The program is also different because it takes much of the discipline out of the parents' hands and puts the responsibility for appropriate behavior on the child, because all the rules and consequences are clearly set out ahead of time. Discipline becomes a task of simply enforcing the rules.

### Zeroing in on Problem Behaviors

On this page, list all of your child's problem behaviors. Include those behaviors that she does too often, for example, fighting, and also include those behaviors that she needs to do more often, for example, cleaning her room. There is space for at least eight behaviors, so please take your time and list as many problem behaviors as you can.

Make a list of all your child's problem behaviors.

### Problem Behaviors

Example: *She comes home too late.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Next, make a list of the two or three problem behaviors that you think are most necessary to change in your child, that is, the ones that are most important to you. Go back to your first list of problem behaviors and review it carefully. Choose only those two or three problem behaviors that you want to change the most. Include them on the target behaviors list on **page 5**. Think carefully; which behaviors are most important to you?

## Target Behaviors

Make a list of the two or three problem behaviors (from the previous list) that you most want to change now, that is, the ones that are most important to you.

### Target Behaviors

Example: *She talks back to me.*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Your Child's Needs

In order to get the behavior they want from their children, parents must identify and control certain things the children value. Parents must be “in charge of the chips,” so to speak. However, it is important to know the difference between what a child really needs and what a child merely wants or desires. Desires can be used as bargaining chips—needs should never be.

Below, you will see a list of what are called “basic privileges.” These are needs that a child should get “free”—no strings attached. The first is food. This is obvious, but as noted on the list, only essential, nutritious food counts as a basic privilege. It does not include special desserts or any favorite foods that you always keep in the refrigerator for the child, such as ice cream or soft drinks. Another obvious free privilege (or basic privilege, as I am calling them) is shelter. A third is clothing, and, again, it is noted on the list that only essential clothing is included. Expensive and popular designer jeans, special brand-name running shoes, and similar kinds of things are not included. Finally, there is love, a basic privilege I do not need to say any more about.

### Basic Privileges

- **Food** (only nutritious food; does not include special desserts or favorite foods around the house, such as ice cream, etc.)
- **Shelter** (a safe home environment, with some private space.)

- **Clothing** (only essential clothing; does not include designer jeans, Nikes, etc.)
- **Love**

Children should always receive the four basic privileges free. There is one more addition to the free list—a “growth privilege.” Growth privileges are activities that are important, even essential, to a child’s growth. They should not, therefore, be treated as optional privileges; they should never be withdrawn regardless of the child’s behavior. Some examples of growth privileges are Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, music and ballet lessons, church youth groups, 4-H Clubs, and extracurricular activities at school, including, of course, athletics. A child may sometimes need special encouragement to participate in growth activities. In such cases, you may want to encourage participation by making a rule that earns a certain privilege for participating in the activity.

Below is space to make another list. List some growth privileges for your child. Again, these are activities that you think are necessary for your child’s growth. There is room for four; try to list at least several important growth activities for your child.

## Growth Privileges

Make a list of activities that you think are essential to your child’s growth. These growth privileges should always be available and should never be taken away for bad behavior.

### Growth Privileges

Example: *Girl Scouts*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.



“Growth privileges” are always available to the child, free.

## Optional Privileges, or Rewards

All privileges that are not “basic” or “growth” are considered “optional.” As such, they should not be given free—they should be earned. Giving optional privileges for free is one of the most common things that parents do, and this program is designed to help correct it.

[Some parents do not like the idea of withholding—up front—all of a child’s “fun” privileges. Again, if your child generally behaves, with only an occasional need to take away a privilege, then you do not need this program. Stick with what works best and feels right to you. This program is for parents who have tried different approaches and nothing seems to work.]

Because they should be earned, optional privileges are also often called “rewards.” This type of privilege includes things or activities. An example of a thing is a specific food reward, such as a candy bar. An example of an activity privilege is going to a movie. In this program, you must choose privileges that are highly desirable to your child. Each child is different, and as your child’s parent, you have the best idea of what she desires. Another thing to remember: the younger the child, the more frequently she has to be rewarded. It is important that the child see the positive benefits of good behavior by frequent rewards.

## Optional Privileges: Basic Principles

- Optional privileges must be earned.
- Optional privileges (also called “rewards”) may be things or activities.
- Choose rewards that are highly desired by your child.
- The younger the child, the more frequently she has to be rewarded.
- It is important for the child to see the positive results of her good behavior by frequent rewards.

Below is a short list of some sample optional privileges, or rewards. Rewards will differ from child to child and also for the same child at different ages. In addition to the more standard rewards on the list, larger rewards, such as horseback riding lessons, an old (but safe) clunker car that father would be willing to purchase, or perhaps a weekend trip, are sometimes appropriate for special behavior or a longer period of desired behavior. Young children often view special activities with a parent (or parents) as rewarding; such activities include fishing, going to a park or playground, swimming, and attending a football game. Teenagers, on the other hand, generally put more value on time spent with their peers.

## Sample Optional Privileges

**For Younger Children:**      **For Teenagers:**

Dessert	Dating
Going outside after dinner	Going shopping
Going to fast-food restaurant	Going to the movies
Having a favorite meal	Listening to music
Having a friend stay overnight	Nonbasic clothes
Playing a computer/video game	Staying up past normal bedtime
Special activity with a parent	Use of cell phone
Use of bike/skateboard	Use of car
Watching TV	Watching TV
Going to the waterpark	Watching videos/DVDs

## Your Child's Desires

Below, make a list of optional privileges—things your child likes but doesn't absolutely need. In many cases, your child may already be getting these free, but you should include them here anyway. Think back to the basic privileges; if something is not food, shelter, clothing, love, or a growth activity, it should appear on this list; almost anything your child likes can be considered an optional privilege. Again, there is space for a number of responses, and you should think this through carefully, listing as many things as you can that your child finds rewarding.

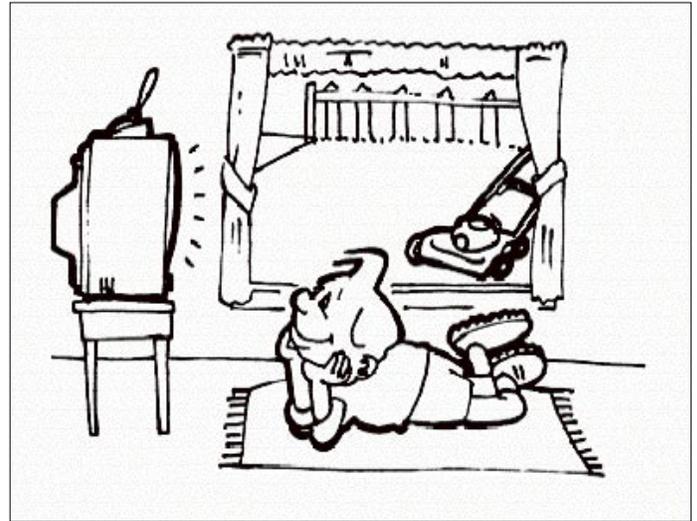
### Optional Privileges

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

Now choose three optional privileges (from the list you just made) that are *most* desired by your child. Try to think of the things or activities that motivate your child the most. Put them in order, with the most desired first.

### Most Desired Privileges

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Optional privileges should be earned.

## Rule-Making

Rules are the exact opposite of a child's problem behaviors. A rule takes a problem behavior and states it as the positive behavior that a parent desires. There are several points to discuss about rules. First, never make too many rules. Only a very few rules can be regularly enforced. In this program, we are going to start with two or three rules that cover only the most important problem behaviors of your child.

A rule must be very clear. All possible loopholes must be plugged up by making rules very specific, because children will usually test for loopholes. For example, one parent had a rule allowing her teenager to earn a movie on Friday or Saturday night if she did her list of chores each week. Unfortunately, there was only one movie theater in town, and one weekend it was showing an "R"-rated movie. Using much wisdom, the parent decided to explain that she had made a mistake and had not written the rule to be specific enough. Clearly, a movie could be earned only if it were rated "G," "PG," or "PG-13." The rule was rewritten to include that change, and the teenager was given a special onetime \$5 reward to make up for missing the movie.

A rule should be so clear and specific that anyone (a baby-sitter, for example) should be able to tell whether the rule has been followed. **On page 8** is an example of a very specific rule. As you can see, the rule is written like a law. In writing a new law, the lawmakers must always define what each word means. You must do the same for a rule.

### Example Rule

Rule: *You must be in the house at 6 p.m. on weekdays.*

- “You” means all the children who live here (not Mom and not Dad).
- “Must be” means that you will not earn your privilege to operate electronic things, such as TV, iPod, radio, and computer, for the rest of that evening and the entire next day if you are late.
- “In the house” means both feet inside any of the following doors: front door, side door, basement door.
- “At 6 p.m.” means six in the afternoon, on the same day, as indicated by the kitchen clock.
- “On weekdays” means Sunday through Thursday.
- The total rule is in effect whenever your mother, father, or the sitter is in the house at 6 p.m.. or from the time after 6 p.m. that he or she arrives home.

This rule may seem silly to some people. However, a rule does not have to seem important to anyone but the rule-maker, who is, of course, very interested in enforcement of that rule. To be effective, a rule must be enforced every time it is broken. Rules will almost always be tested by children, so parents must be prepared to enforce the rules they make.

In writing a rule, it is useful to get the child’s ideas. Important information may be discovered that will help you write a better rule. If you get the child’s ideas, you will find that in many cases he is willing to do far more than you would ask in return for something he wants very much. Sometimes you may be willing, too, to give your child a special privilege in return for extra-good behavior. However, once a rule is written, it is not open for discussion, unless the rulemaker wants to change it.

A rule does not have to pass a fairness test, either, but it must be possible for the child to carry out. Finally, parents must realize that not all rules are for all members of the family. It is not necessary to enforce a “problem” rule for those who are mature enough to practice self-control. Therefore, be very specific about who must follow the rule.

This chapter is most concerned about rules to correct problem behaviors, but, as mentioned earlier, rules can also encourage positive (“growth”) behaviors. An example is a parent who wants her child to attend the church youth group. If the child resists, the parent can make a rule that if the child goes to the weekly group, she can get some very

desired privilege. Of course, the child still has the choice of not attending and not getting the privilege. It is important, though, to provide the child with chances to earn important privileges in return for very good behaviors, above and beyond normal everyday expectations.

Now we are ready to start making rules. Look back at **page 5**, where you listed two or three major problem behaviors of your child that you want to target. Think of a rule about the first targeted problem behavior. Try to express the rule *positively*. Here is an example of how to write a rule in a positive way: Let’s say the number one problem on the list is fighting with a sister. Instead of making the rule “no fighting with your sister,” make the rule into a positive one such as “playing with your sister will be respectful and will involve no hurtful touching.” You may also have to add a description of inappropriate behavior, but again, try to emphasize the positive.

For Rule 1 on **page 9**, write a rule concerning your child’s number one problem behavior. Just take your time and do your best. When you are writing the rule, be sure to write all the parts to it. Look back to **page 7** again for an example of how to be very clear about defining what a rule means. Be just as clear with your rule. Make your list underneath the rule, and take plenty of time.

Next, look at your rule and run it through the rule checklist at the bottom of **page 9**. If you can answer “yes” to a checklist question, then check it off. If not, go back and rewrite the rule—add to it or clarify it—so that it will pass the checklist. Can you enforce the rule 100 per cent of the time? Have you clearly defined the expected behavior, that is, said exactly what you want the child to do? “Clean the bedroom once a week” is not specific enough about the expected behavior. What does “clean the bedroom” mean? Is the rule very specific?

Finally, check the rule for any possible loopholes. A common loophole concerns where the child must be at curfew time. Children will often find a loophole, so they will be home in time, but they will not be in the house. They might be out in front of the house talking with a friend. That is an example of a loophole that you would need to close up by defining more clearly what the curfew means. For example, “be inside the house, inside the doors to the house, by 10 p.m.”

When you have completed the checklist, rewrite the rule at the bottom of the page. Write a very clear, good rule. Most rules are, in fact, several sentences long. Take as much time and space as you need.

# Rule 1

## Unpolished Rule:

Be very specific and list all parts to the rule. Define each word, or part, clearly.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

## Rule checklist:

- ✓ Is it enforceable 100 per cent of the time?
- ✓ Is the expected behavior clearly defined?
- ✓ Is the rule very specific?
- ✓ Have all loopholes been plugged?

## Final Rule:

When you have finished the first rule, go on to the next pages and complete Rules 2 and 3, just as you did the first rule. Write the rules to apply to target behaviors 2 and 3 on **page 5**. Carry each rule through from the writing of the unpolished rule and its very specific parts, to the checklist,

and, finally, to the writing of the final rule at the bottom of the page. This should take you at least fifteen minutes. It should be done very carefully, because these rules will be the basis of further discussion, so take your time.

## Rule 2

### Unpolished Rule:

Be very specific and list all parts to the rule. Define each word, or part, clearly.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

### Rule checklist:

- ✓ Is it enforceable 100 per cent of the time?
- ✓ Is the expected behavior clearly defined?
- ✓ Is the rule very specific?
- ✓ Have all loopholes been plugged?

### Final Rule:

## Rule 3

### Unpolished Rule:

Be very specific and list all parts to the rule. Define each word, or part, clearly.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

### Rule checklist:

- ✓ Is it enforceable 100 per cent of the time?
- ✓ Is the expected behavior clearly defined?
- ✓ Is the rule very specific?
- ✓ Have all loopholes been plugged?

### Final Rule:

## Your Child's Behavior Agreement

It is now time to introduce the Family Contract. On **page 12** is a Family Contract form. On the left-hand side of the page, in the Rule column, write the rules that you have just completed: 1 – 3. After you have finished, at the bot-

tom of the page, where it says “Growth Privileges,” write in the growth privileges that you have decided on for your child. (See **page 5** for a reminder.) You are now halfway to a contract.

# Family Contract

Post on Refrigerator

Rule	Privilege
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Growth privileges:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Look back at **page 7**, where you listed your child's most desired privileges. You are going to link these privileges to your rules. For example, with the first rule, the child will be getting a particular privilege if he follows the rule. Write this privilege down in the Family Contract. Be very careful that it is written positively so that the child has the privilege as long as he follows the rule. If the child doesn't follow the rule, the privilege is not given for a day or two, or even a week. The amount of time that the privilege is not earned for breaking each rule needs to be stated very clearly in the Family Contract. **Pages 14 and 15** contain some sample Family Contracts that may help you as you work on your contract.

Just a note about writing rules and privileges in a positive form: You have already tried to write your rules in a positive way and you should also always try to put your privileges in the same positive form. An example of this is privilege 1 in Sample Family Contract 1 on **page 14**. Obviously, according to the way this rule is written, if the child is late and comes home after the curfew, he is going to be restricted as a result. However, look at how the privilege is worded: "Activities outside the house." On a school night, the child is free to go outside and do what he pleases. This is a privilege that the child is allowed as long as he follows the rule. If he does not follow the rule, then he will not be allowed the privilege of leaving the house for the next two school nights.

In the contract, you should tie at least one of your child's optional privileges to each rule. In some cases, you will link to a specific rule more than one privilege that the child enjoys. A commonly used example is the privilege of "electronic things." This includes iPod, radio, television, telephone/cell phone, and computer/video games, all lumped together and tied to a specific rule.

At the bottom of the Family Contract are blanks for the date of the contract and signatures. Anyone who will be enforcing the Family Contract in the home should sign it, and so should anyone who must follow the rules. In some rare cases, a child will refuse to sign because she feels the rules are not fair. In these cases, after you have made every effort to talk with the child, just note at the bottom of the contract that she refused to sign. However, the child still must obey the rules, even if the Family Contract is not signed. (Remember: rules don't have to be fair from the child's point of view.)

Now take some time to work on your Family Contract. There is a blank practice form on **page 16**. Again, look at the samples for help.

## Your Role in Changing Your Child's Behavior

The enforcement of rules is a critical factor in the success of this program. First, you must enforce a rule 100 per cent of the time. This is very important and there can be no exceptions, unless the rule has been lifted ahead of time for a special occasion. An example would be if a child needs to come in past the curfew because of involvement in a one-time church camping trip. Any regular exceptions should be written into the rule. For rare instances, however, you may decide ahead of time to lift the rule, but clearly, it must be well in advance of the special activity.

Another important point: if a rule is no longer needed and the appropriate behavior can be done without it, simply stop the rule and praise the child for his accomplishment.

Always enforce rules unemotionally and ignore any arguing or attempts at explanations. If you wrote a rule correctly, you should know if it was broken.

Expect rules to be tested. In fact, many children's behavior worsens after starting this particular program. This is a good sign; the child simply wants you to give it up. The child doesn't like it, and he will make it tough for you to enforce the contract.

Parents must agree on rules and enforce them equally. This goes for anyone who may be in charge: other adults living in the household, a babysitter, or, say, a grandparent whom the child visits regularly. (In the case of a grandparent or other person who simply is unwilling or unable to enforce the rule, don't push it; write an exception into the rule.)

After a rule is broken, always go to the contract on the refrigerator with a serious look on your face, and read the results aloud with the child. This is essential. If you don't do this, the program won't work, so do it. Even if you don't think it is important, believe me, it is—do it every time a rule is broken. Sometimes the child will be angry and will refuse to go with you. You should go anyway, telling the child that you went and what was on the Family Contract. *This helps to make the program a learning experience.*

# Sample Family Contract 1

Post on Refrigerator

Rule	Privilege
1. Curfew is 10 p.m. on school nights (Sunday through Thursday). This means you must be in the house.	1. Activities outside the house. For each 30 minutes past curfew, you will be restricted to the house for the next two school nights.
2. Curfew is midnight on nonschool nights. This means you must be in the house.	2. Activities outside the house. For each 15 minutes past curfew, you will be restricted to the house for the next nonschool night.
3. Take out trash every Monday night before going to bed.	3. Use of TV on Tuesday night.
4. Study school assignments for one hour after dinner, Sunday night through Thursday night, at the desk in your room. No music or other distraction.	4. Allowance of \$5 on Friday at 6:30 p.m. (If the rule is not followed during the week, allowance will not be available on Friday for that week.)

Growth privileges: church youth group, baseball team

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Sample Family Contract 2

Post on Refrigerator

Rule	Privilege
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Use respectful talk and behavior toward step-mother and father. Examples of nonrespect: talking back, throwing things, raising voice when corrected.</li><li>2. Be in the house, not outside, by 6:30 p.m. on school nights (Sunday through Thursday).</li><li>3. Study or do homework for 45 minutes on school nights.</li><li>4. Chores: (a) Fold clothes on wash day (not the next day); (b) Dust playroom furniture by noon on Saturday; (c) Vacuum carpet in front hall and playroom by 6 p.m. on Wednesday and by noon on Saturday; (d) Pick up all dishes and glasses that you use, and put them in the sink.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Go to game room or movie on Friday or Saturday night. (If the rule is not followed during the week, privilege is not available for the coming week.)</li><li>2. Activities outside the house. For each 15 minutes past curfew, you will be restricted to the house for the next nonschool night.</li><li>3. See friends the next school day from after school until curfew. (If the rule is not followed, privilege is not available for that day and the next day.)</li><li>4. Use of TV, radio, or iPod that night.</li></ol>

Growth privileges: Girl Scouts, piano lessons

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Family Contract

Post on Refrigerator

Rule	Privilege
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.

Growth privileges:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Finally, if a child refuses to have a privilege withdrawn, then enforce the contract by physical withdrawal of the privilege. For example, if a child continues to watch TV, lock the TV; there are locks to do that. Sears sells a tiny lock that goes into the hole in your TV plug; it costs less than five dollars. If she won't stop riding her bike, lock up the bike. If your child breaks a rule for which you can't physically withdraw the privilege, then you may want to "up the ante." This means adding more privileges to be earned for that particular rule-behavior. Breaking the rule would mean even fewer privileges. If a child is getting only the basic privileges and perhaps a few growth privileges, after a while life will be very boring. If you stick with it, your child will eventually realize that you mean business!

After some experience, it will be easy for you to write a rule and select a privilege that encourages your child to behave more appropriately. However, after starting a rule, you may need to make some changes or to fine-tune the rule. For example, if you weren't clear enough with your rule, the child may find a loophole. Rewrite the rule. You also may have chosen a privilege that is not desired enough. For example, your rule may require the child to make his bed every day in order to have the privilege of watching TV after school. If the child simply listens to music or talks on the telephone instead, you may need to rewrite the privilege as "use of electronic things." You may have chosen a rule that is too difficult for the child to follow. In this case, you may want to rewrite the rule so that it is easier for the child to earn the privilege.

Often, parents write rules about getting better grades in school. If a child is doing poorly, the parents may give the child some privilege if she passes all her subjects in, say, a nine-week grading period. Clearly, this time-frame is too long. Rules about schoolwork and grades should be based on day-to-day or weekly issues. In many schools, children get graded on many things during the course of a week: pop quizzes, homework, tests, and the like. In a week, a child can sometimes bring home ten different grades. In this case, it would be highly motivating to earn a reward with each grade.

A child can be required to do a regular amount of studying or reading nightly regardless of whether she has any homework. The child can show daily that an amount of studying—which is normal for her grade level—has been completed. Sometimes a child is a slow learner or is not

interested in school because of poor teaching. These are reasons why it is best to make rules about study habits first. See Chapter 3 for more about school motivation.

The list below reviews issues for enforcing rules:

### Enforcement of Rules

- 100 per cent enforcement is essential—no exceptions, unless the rule has been lifted ahead of time.
- If a rule is no longer needed and good behavior is possible without it, stop the rule and praise the child.
- Enforce rules unemotionally; ignore arguing and explanations. If you wrote a rule correctly, you should know if it was broken.
- Expect testing of the rules. In fact, many children's behavior worsens after starting this program. The child wants you to give it up and will make it tough on you.
- Parents must both agree on rules and enforce them equally. This includes all adults living or supervising in the home.
- If the child refuses to have a privilege taken away, enforce the contract by physically withholding the privilege.

Now, some final ideas and observations: This program works, in my experience, about 90 per cent of the time. Its failure usually involves a parent who uses it incorrectly or who just gives up. Stick with the program; it can work for you. Sometimes it is helpful for a parent to get support from another parent or from a school guidance counselor. Often, when we are frustrated in trying to do something new, support in the form of talking and airing feelings with someone or getting a friend to use the particular program, too, may be useful in overcoming some of the difficulties. It can make a big difference.

In unusual cases, a child's inappropriate behavior may have an emotional illness as its basis. If you suspect that, consult someone you trust such as the family doctor, a minister, or a school guidance counselor. You also could contact a professional who specializes in working with children, such as a mental health counselor, social worker, psychologist, psychiatrist, or pastoral counselor.

## RULES FOR UNRULY CHILDREN

Also, it is important to always give praise along with the privilege (reward) you give your child. Eventually, you may be able to give up the formal rules and privileges and rely only on the use of praise.

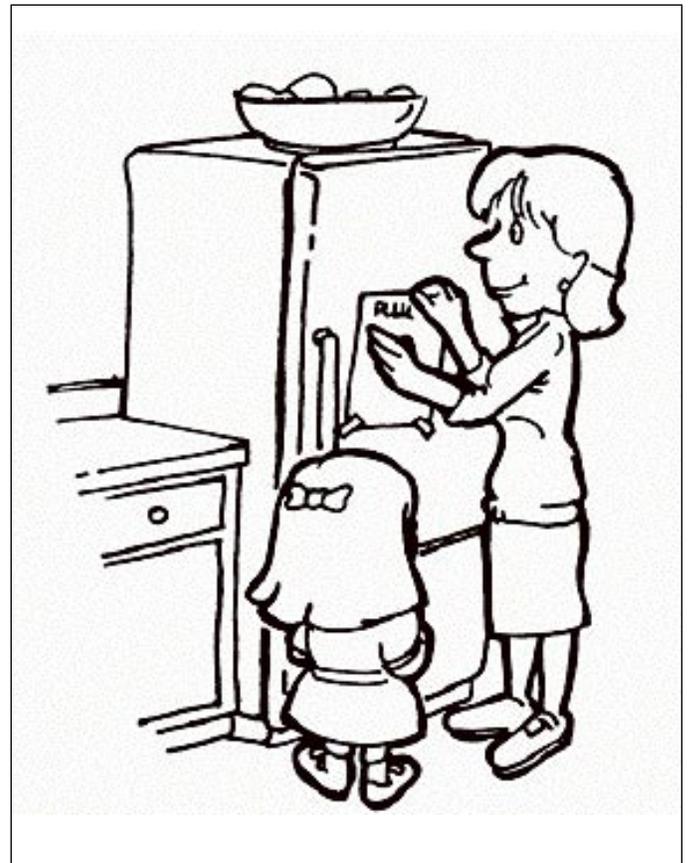
Finally, in review, below is a list of “must” things that you are going to have to do to make this program successful. Doing them increases the chances that the program will work for you.

### Ways to Ensure Success

- *Get your child involved in making rules; ask her what she wants by way of privileges.*
- *As problems arise, you may write new rules, but always try to think about possible loopholes ahead of time, if possible, and write rules to avoid them.*
- *Once you have completed the Family Contract, type it into a computer and print it on a plain piece of paper. In the adult world, people do business in this formal way, with a contract, and it is good to begin teaching this to your child.*
- *You must post the Family Contract on the refrigerator—a very public place where it can be referred to very easily. This is absolutely essential. If you do not do this, the program probably will not work. This can mean the difference between success and failure. After a rule is broken, always go to the refrigerator in a robotlike way and show the child the consequences on the contract.*
- *You must enforce rules 100 per cent of the time.*
- *Use praise in addition to the earning of a privilege; that is, use them together.*
- *Enforce rules unemotionally. No arguing, yelling, or getting upset. This will take practice and willpower on your part, but it is necessary, and in the long run, it will make discipline much easier for you. When the child breaks a rule, the consequences must be enforced. Let the Family Contract be the “bad guy.” This takes a lot of pressure off you, because getting angry at kids, arguing with them, and punishing them take a toll on parents.*
- *Stick with it; this program can work for you!*

That’s the program! Good luck! Remember, in your household, you can be the boss when you have to be. In the long run, you will even make life easier for your child, because you will be setting important limits, and they will be fair limits. The child can have what he wants, if he learns to behave appropriately.

The next chapter is designed to help you explain the program to your child.



Rules must be permanently posted in a “public” place and enforced unemotionally.

## Chapter 2

# “All About Rules” for Children and Teenagers

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### A Note to Parents

*If you use the rule-privilege program described in Chapter 1, you may read this chapter and discuss it with your child to help her understand the program. Teens should read it themselves. You can summarize the points for younger children.*

This chapter is meant for children and teenagers. Your mother or father or both are about to begin a program at home to help you all get along better. Your parents are responsible for raising you in a way that helps you learn how to behave correctly and become a good adult. Some parents will be using this program because their child or teenager is having problems at home. In many cases, the child or teenager doesn't think there are any problems, but the parents do. They believe there is a problem, and therefore, they have decided to use this program to try to help you. In other cases, parents may use this program even when there are not any special problems at home. In this case, the program can still help families get along better, and it may prevent serious problems from developing. So when parents use this program, it doesn't necessarily mean that there are problems. The program is simply to help you get along at home the best you can.

The program is for both parents and their children or teenagers. First, here's why it's meant for parents. Parents sometimes have trouble disciplining their children. Often, when you do something wrong, your parents punish you *afterward*. With a young child, this punishment might be in the form of grounding to the house or bedroom. For a teenager, it might be a strong talking-to, a lecture, or being yelled at. Sometimes, a privilege, such as the use of the telephone or

a bike, is taken away. These things usually happen *after* you have done something wrong, sometimes after you have already been given a warning. With this kind of punishment there is a big problem for both parents and children. For parents, it is a pretty emotional situation. They are really upset with the way you have behaved. Sometimes, out of frustration, they will give a very big punishment, a very strong one—perhaps grounding for a number of days. Sometimes they might do almost nothing when you may have done exactly the same thing that was punished before. Sometimes they will be in a bad mood and do one thing; at other times, perhaps on your birthday, they won't do anything at all. Obviously, trying to help you with your behavior by punishing you so you'll learn the right way to behave can be difficult for parents. This program is for them because it will help them to help you in a very consistent way. This means that they are always going to react to the same behavior in the same way. With this program, you'll always know how your parents are going to act.

### How Will the Program Help You?

How is this program for you—a child or teenager? At first thought, you might be upset that your parents are going to try to do something different. However, this program will really make life easier for you. There are going to be some changes, some that you may not like. It may seem a little strict at first. But in fact, this program will help make things consistent so you will always know how your parents are going to act. There will be no more guessing about what your parents will do. Most important, you will always know what is expected of you. Always! And if you don't follow the expected behavior, you will always know what will happen.

## What Is This Program?

The next few pages will tell you more about this program, which is called the Rule-Privilege Program. First, let's talk about what both words in that name mean, and then we'll discuss how the program works and what you can expect once you and your parents begin to use it.

A rule, especially a rule about your behavior, is something you are supposed to do or not do. With this program, we are mostly going to talk about things you are supposed to do, things that are expected of you. An example is chores you are supposed to do, perhaps clean up your room or vacuum the house once a week. You might have a curfew to be home at a certain time. Or maybe you are supposed to do homework every night. These are all examples of rules that say you are supposed to do something.

Another type of rule can be about things you are not supposed to do. Fighting and being disrespectful to someone are two examples of things your parents probably don't want you to do. In this program, these kinds of rules will be stated positively, which means we won't say, "don't fight," but instead we'll say, "You must get along with your brother or sister without touching each other physically and hurting one another." Of course, this means you are not allowed to hit your brother or sister. But again, we will try to put the rules in a positive way, telling you what you are expected to do.

Next, we come to the word "privilege." What is a privilege? A privilege is something that you earn. This is very important to understand. It is like a reward. You know what the word "reward" means. If you do something good, your parents often reward you for it. Sometimes a reward might be a word of praise: "You did a good job; I'm proud of you." A very specific kind of reward might be getting some tickets to a ball game or getting a new pair of jeans. When you have done something well, you are rewarded for it.

The reason this is called the Rule-Privilege Program is that it is based on certain rule-behaviors that you will be required to do. A rule-behavior is simply following a rule with a specific behavior, such as getting home on time. In return for following that rule, you will get a certain privilege. You will always get that privilege free as long as you follow the rule. You will always know ahead of time that if you don't follow the rule, you won't get the privilege. It's as simple as that. It's your choice now. If you want the privilege, that is, the reward, you need to follow the rule.

## What Have Your Parents Done?

Right now, this might all seem a little confusing. Let's look at what your mother or father or both have done and how it's going to work. That might make it easier to understand.

Your parents have made a list of your behaviors that concern them or ones that they want to expect of you. It might be coming home on time; it might be getting along with your brother or sister; it might be doing your homework or any other kind of behavior. After they wrote down those behaviors, they took the list and picked two or three of the most important ones to make into rules. So you will be expected to follow two or three different rules that they have written.

Next, they made a list of privileges, that is, things that are important to you. They started with a long list and picked several of the things that you like most. Your parents have chosen several of your favorite privileges to be yours in return for following the rules. One important point here: you are already getting most of these privileges free, and now your mom and/or dad are going to make you do something *before* you get them. This might upset you, but remember: you can still get your privileges. In fact, parents often give their children more privileges with this program than they would normally. So you can get what you want, but now you always will be expected to do something to earn them.

## Why Privileges Will Not Be Free

Your parents are starting this program because it provides two basic advantages. The first advantage is that it will help prepare you for adult life. The fact is, in adult life, you don't get a lot of free things. You are usually expected to do something, and in return you get rewarded. Your parents want to help you prepare for adult life, and this will be a good learning experience for you.

The second advantage of this program is that it will make your life much easier. Here's why. Sometimes, when you misbehave, your parents will suddenly take away a privilege. You might get grounded (lose your privilege to leave the house), lose the use of the telephone, lose the use of your bike, or lose the use of the TV. Suddenly, a privilege is taken away—it's gone! You never know what your parents are going to do. Sometimes they do this—

sometimes they do that—sometimes they are fair—sometimes they are unfair. Well, this program will make it a lot easier for you, because from now on things will be very predictable. You will always know exactly what's going to happen. So, out of the blue, your parents will not suddenly take away something that is very important to you. You can always have the privileges you want if you follow the rules; it will be up front, and there will never be any question about it.

At this point, you know that your parents have written several rules and have made a list of several privileges that you can get if you follow the rules. Your parents should talk with you before they write the final rules and privileges. Give them your ideas. This will help make the rules and privileges that everyone wants.

## What Is a Family Contract?

Your parents will be writing a Family Contract. A Family Contract is the official written rules and privileges. A contract, as you may know, is a legal paper. You should treat the Family Contract as an important agreement between you and your parents.

The Family Contract is divided into two sides. On the left side is a list of all the rules—two or three or maybe even four. On the right side of the paper are listed the privileges you can have as long as you follow the rules. Every privilege will be paired with a particular rule. This will be very clear. Talk it over with your parents and make sure that everyone agrees on the rules and the privileges.

At the bottom of the Family Contract is a space to write in growth privileges. Growth privileges are simply activities that parents think are very important, such as the 4-H Club, Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, or athletics such as the school football team. It might also be involvement in the library club or church youth group. Whatever your growth privileges, your parents will always give them to you free—you do not have to earn these. There are some worthwhile activities that parents think children and teenagers should have the right to do, no matter what. You will never have them taken away. Sometimes, your parents may want you to do a growth activity that you don't want to do. They might decide to make it a rule, so you can earn a privilege in return for participating in the activity. The

reason they might do this is because they think the activity is important for your growth.

At the very bottom of the Family Contract is space for the date and for everybody in the family to sign it. The contract is to be posted on the refrigerator. It will always be there for you to look at so you can know exactly what is expected of you in order for you to have the privilege that you want.

## What Happens If You Don't Follow the Rules?

You can always have the privileges listed on the right side of the page of the Family Contract as long as you follow the rules. If you don't follow the rules, this is what's going to happen: One of your parents will call you over, and the two of you will go to the refrigerator and look at the contract together. You will see what the result is for not following the rule—you don't get a certain privilege. Your parent will explain to you that you have not earned that privilege for a period of time and that after that amount of time, you can have the privilege back if you follow the rule then. If you still don't follow the rule, you still won't get the privilege.

This trip to the refrigerator to read the Family Contract is very important and must be done every time a rule is not followed. Your parents know that even if you refuse to go to the refrigerator with them because you are mad, they are required to go to the refrigerator and look at the contract. You should go with them, however, because this is part of the program and it is important for you to learn what is expected and to know what the results are.

Your parents have written the rules in a way to make them enforceable 100 per cent of the time. That means that you can't get away with anything. Sometimes young people test the rules to see if their parents are serious about them. Your parents do mean business. They will enforce the rules 100 per cent of the time; break a rule, and you will not earn a privilege—guaranteed!

## Why the Family Contract Will Make It Easier for You

In the long run, this program will make things much easier for you because there will never be the issue about fairness. The rules will be so clearly written that if you have broken one, it will be clear to everyone that you have broken it, and you will not earn your privilege.

Your parents are instructed by this program to enforce the rules in a way that is called “unemotional.” When your parents get mad at you, they might yell or do any number of things, and you might even yell back at them. All of this is unnecessary. In this program, they will enforce the rules like a robot, without any emotion. They also have been told not to listen to any arguments from you, to ignore any screaming or carrying on by you. The results of breaking a rule are clearly decided well ahead of time. You know what is expected of you, and you know you that have the choice. If you don’t follow the rule, you will not receive the privilege. That’s up to you; it’s your choice.

Again, this program should make your world much easier because you won’t have to hassle your parents and spend half your time figuring out what they are going to do. You won’t have to spend time trying to get around a rule. The rules in the Family Contract have no loopholes, and your parents will enforce them every time. This makes things easier for everybody.

Let’s go back to a point made earlier. It may upset you that your parents are changing things and that now some of your privileges that were free before must be earned by following rules. It is understandable that this might upset you, and you might say that your friend next door doesn’t have to do this kind of thing. Just keep in mind another point made earlier—that this program will help you prepare for the adult world. If you look at what is expected of adults, you will see they are required to follow certain rules and to do certain things in life in order to get the privileges they want. That’s just the way the adult world is. Adults also use contracts in their lives. Using the Family Contract in this program will help you learn how adults do business in their world. So, yes, this program may be for young people who are having problems or for parents who just want to change the way they are doing things around the house, but it is also a program for mature young people who want to be everything they can be. It is a program to help you grow up to be a better adult.

## What If You Don’t Like a Rule?

In some cases, your parents may make a rule that you don’t like. Remember though, they are your parents and they know what’s best for you. You may think a rule is unfair, but you will still have to live with it. Rules do not have to be fair. What is guaranteed to be fair in this program is the enforcement of the rules; it will always be done in the same way. So if you think a rule is unfair, just remember—it will be enforced fairly and you won’t have to worry about getting punished in a way that seems unfair.

It is hoped that you will give this program a very good try. You have been following your parents’ rules and living with their punishments for a long time now. Having to do something different can be upsetting. So maybe you will test the rules to see if your parents really mean business—to see if they might give up and go back to the way things used to be. This is normal. But once the program gets going and you realize that your parents will enforce the rules and that you will have to live with the rules, then you’ll find after a few weeks that it really is easier to follow the rules, because then you can have the privileges you want. Many times you can get more from your parents than you originally did with the old ways they disciplined you. As in many cases in life, you can get most things you want in life if you follow the rules.

## Good Luck!

This program is designed to make your life easier. The rules will be enforced fairly, and you will always know what your parents will do for punishment. Be sure to tell your parents the things you really want and the things you are willing to do to get those privileges. You can get an awful lot if you show that you are grown-up and can follow rules.

## Chapter 3

# Motivating Children and Teenagers in School

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For many parents, their child's school performance is a source of much concern and unhappiness. Poor performance can take many forms: disruptive behavior, suspensions, poor attitude, lack of motivation, failure to do homework, performance below ability, and the list goes on. When such behavior occurs, parents find it difficult to stand on the sidelines without trying to do something. Almost all parents know the value and importance of a good education; they want better lives for their children, and education is the best road to it. This special concern with a child's school performance can lead to much worry and frustration if the child is not "making it" in school.

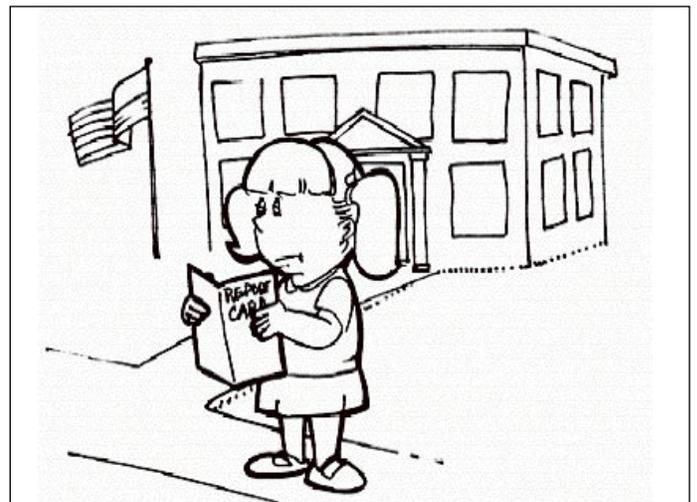
This chapter is meant to help you help your child in school. The approach you will learn to use is not a magic solution, but it does work. Parents use many different ways to encourage their children toward positive school performance. If a method works, and it is not harmful to the child, then use it! But this chapter is for parents who have tried unsuccessfully to change their child's school behavior. The chapter offers a very specific method to help you if you are one of these frustrated parents.

### Daily Report Card

In this method, the key to your child's improvement in school is the use of a daily report card. Just as it sounds, it's a report that the child gets every day. In most schools, children receive a report card about every nine weeks. When a child receives poor grades or comments about poor behavior on his report card, parents often punish the child by taking away his privileges, scolding, and the like. Often, teachers and school officials have already tried to help the child perform better. Unfortunately, the school has little clout to encourage the child to do better. The punishments

the school can use for misbehavior are often ineffective. Suspension may get the child right where he wants—out of school. And a poor report card is seldom a useful motivator for school improvement, even if the child is punished for it at home.

Schools and parents often fail to change a child's behavior for two reasons. First, children must have immediate feedback about their behavior/performance. Every nine weeks is just not frequent enough for children who are having school problems. Even one week is too long! Second, children usually have little ongoing responsibility for their behavior at school. They are responsible at school, but as already mentioned, the school's methods to control behavior often are not very effective with problem children. The school's hands are tied. Schools can do only so much. Children need to be held more responsible at home for their school behavior.



Capable children often need to be motivated to perform to their ability.

The daily report card overcomes these two major hurdles to school success. It provides immediate, daily feedback for the child and parents about the child's behavior in school. Along with the rule-privilege contract, it makes the child responsible for her school behavior or performance at home every day.

## Rule-Privilege Program

The daily report card is used as part of a rule-privilege program. This method is described in Chapter 1, "The Rule-Privilege Program."

The best way to learn about a daily report card program is to do it. So let's start by identifying your child's problem behaviors. If you consult Chapter 1, you will see that the rule-privilege program is usually set out in the form of a Family Contract, posted on the refrigerator. Rules must be very specific, and parents must enforce them unemotionally. Rules can include any behaviors, and of course, the ones we are interested in now are school behaviors. A sample rule-privilege contract, using the daily report card, is provided **on page 25**.

In this sample contract, the daily report card serves as a ticket to watch TV or to have other privileges. Notice that the rule has been carefully written to include what "good" means. The privilege is also written out in a very specific way. Because in this household it appears the child may be home alone with a brother or sister for a while after school, the privilege begins when a parent is there to enforce it. In this case, even when she gets a poor daily report card, the child may watch television after school, but as soon as Mom or Dad comes home, the rule is in effect.

This sample should give you a better idea of how the daily report card works within the rule-privilege program. Again, it is important that you read Chapter 1 carefully.

## Involving Your Child's Teacher

In order for you to use a daily report card with your child, you must get the cooperation of the child's teacher (or teachers). Do not take this for granted! Teachers are busy people. You should respect their time by asking for their help. Teachers are almost always willing to help if you do two things: First, ask them at a time when they are not rushed or stressed. Second, explain the entire program to them. Although their involvement is important, it is also

minimal; but by sharing the reasons and plans of your program, you will help them understand their role in it. A successful program also may make their job easier with your child. Should a teacher be uncertain about the approach or appear to have it in for your child, ask her to try it for two weeks, and then judge it at that point. Always give the teacher as much feedback as possible about how the program is working. The more a teacher feels a part of the effort and the success of the program, the more the teacher's support and cooperation will be there. A simple letter to the teacher saying how your child's behavior/grades have improved will be appreciated.

You will be asking the teacher (or each teacher) to take about 10 seconds at the end of your child's class to check the daily report card. The teacher is not responsible for keeping the daily note, nor for reminding the child to have it checked. Those two tasks are your child's responsibility.

If it can be arranged, a face-to-face meeting with your child's teacher would be a good way to introduce your program. However, if a meeting is not convenient, a letter will serve the purpose; a sample letter (**see page 26**) is provided for you. You should send the letter to the teacher, with a copy of the daily report card, and then follow it up with a phone call a day or two later. This brings us to the next issue: using the daily report card with your child.



Stay in touch with your child's teacher.

# Family Contract

Post on Refrigerator

Rule	Privilege
<p>1. On every school day you must bring home a good report card. ("Good" is defined as no more than two Nos).</p>	<p>1. You may watch TV or use any electronic device (radio, iPod, videos/DVDs, stereo, home computer; includes battery operated) for one hour from the time Mom or Dad comes home on school days.</p>

Growth privileges: school chorus, soccer team

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

*I would like to ask for your assistance in our attempt to help our child at school. As you know, our child has had some behavior/academic difficulties in school. At home, we are using a rule-privilege program, in which our child can earn favorite privileges after following specific rules. If our child doesn't follow the rules, then the child automatically doesn't get a favorite privilege. I would like to use our home program to make our child more accountable for daily school performance. Therefore, I need daily information from you about our child's performance.*

*I have attached a copy of a daily report card. This card is a way for me to know how our child does in school every day. Please let me know if you think the card needs any changes. I need your help to check "Yes" or "No" for each item on the card at the end of our child's class. It usually takes about 10 seconds. While this seems like a small amount of time, I fully realize that class dismissal time is hectic. I know that having a child come to you at that time every day is a nuisance, especially if the other children come to you at that time also, but I really believe this will help our child, and I know you want all your students performing their best.*

*You do not have to worry about having a card each day or even about reminding our child to have you check the card at the end of the class; both tasks are the child's responsibility. I would ask that you complete the card without commenting on poor behavior/academics; simply check the "No" column. If you like, you may provide extra feedback or praise on any "Yes" responses. If our child argues about any of your judgments, please just ignore it.*

*Please call me if you have any questions. A good time to reach me is \_\_\_\_\_, at telephone number \_\_\_\_\_ or email \_\_\_\_\_.*

*Thank you.*

*Sincerely,*

\_\_\_\_\_

## How to Use the Daily Report Card

Before you begin to use the daily report card with your child, you should have completed two major steps:

1. Make a rule-privilege Family Contract with the rule, meaning the expected appropriate behavior, being "bringing home a good report card." Chapter 1 will help you pick out a particular privilege for your child and put it into the contract. Your child will then have to earn the privilege on a daily basis, and his ticket will be a good report card. By the way, the privilege you choose for this program should be one he would like every day. This is because the child must have an immediate consequence for his misbehavior. However, in some cases, when a non-daily privilege is very much enjoyed, it may also work well. For example, if your teenage daughter lives for the chance to date on Friday or Saturday night, you might require four good report cards each week in order to earn that privilege.
2. Contact the child's teachers and ask for their cooperation.

If you have completed these two steps, you are ready for the next step—beginning the program. Choose the report card you would like to use. **There are samples on pages 27 and 28.** Feel free to make your own or to modify the samples by changing/adding/subtracting categories. Then make about 50 copies of the daily report card, if possible, on colored paper. (Using colored paper will help your child keep track of these report cards among all his school papers.)

It is time to explain the program to your child. You should read through Chapter 2 with your child or teenager. It will be useful to explain the program purpose to the child. Post the rule-privilege Family Contract on your refrigerator and explain to your child that she will have the desired privilege whenever she gives you a good report card. It is best to start the program in one class only—one of the child's better classes. It is helpful to start out making certain the program succeeds by having the child see that it will be easy to earn her privileges. Therefore, you should contact only one teacher to start the program. Then, after two to three weeks, when things are going well, start the program in another class, and so on every week or two

RULES FOR UNRULY CHILDREN

Daily Report Card 1		
Name: _____		
Date: _____		
Teacher: _____		
Did the student . . .		
	Yes	No
Come on time?		
Bring supplies?		
Stay in seat?		
Speak courteously?		
Not talk inappropriately?		
Follow directions?		
Raise hand to get attention?		
Not physically disturb others?		
Not chew gum?		
Clean up?		
Pay attention?		
Complete and hand in assignment on time?		
Grade on test or assignment		
Teacher's initials		
Homework:		

RULES FOR UNRULY CHILDREN

Daily Report Card 2														
Name: _____														
Date: _____														
Period														
Did the youth:	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Arrive on time for class?														
Pay attention?														
Stay in seat unless otherwise permitted?														
Remain quiet unless otherwise permitted?														
Behave acceptably toward peers?														
Behave acceptably toward teachers/adults?														
Follow instructions and attempt classwork during class?														
Is all work up-to-date?														
If a grade was earned, what was it?														
If there is homework, please check.														
Did the youth accept the way this report was marked? (i.e., not complain argue, etc.)														
Teachers' Initials (Please use ink.)														

Special thanks to Trent Hicks for permission to reprint.

until all of your child's teachers are involved. You can ask the first teacher to talk with the other teachers about the program, thereby saving yourself time. Of course, if your child is in elementary school and has only one teacher, then this will not be an issue. It is usually good to begin the program by allowing a child two "Nos," but no more, and still have a good report card. Then you can change it to one "No" after all classes have been added. If your child is doing almost nothing right in school, you may want to begin by requiring only two "Yes" checkmarks for a good report card. Start at whatever level will help the child experience success easily at first. This is better than having her get discouraged and give up.

Give your child a stack of the daily report cards, and tell her it is her responsibility to both take one to school each day and give it to the teacher(s) at the end of the class period.

One final point here about starting the program. As suggested in Chapter 1, it may prove very helpful to get your child's ideas about the best kinds of privileges. Parents usually have a pretty good idea of their child's most desired privileges, but sometimes you can discover very good rewards by asking the child himself. Sometimes he will be willing to follow a difficult rule if, in return, he gets a special reward. However, you must remember not to use growth privileges for this purpose. For example, your child should always be allowed to play in school soccer games. Growth privileges must always remain "free." Consult Chapter 1 for more about growth privileges. That's all. You're ready to start the program. We will cover other issues when we talk about enforcement later.

## Rewarding Good Grades

You have probably noticed that so far nothing has been said about using the rule-privilege program to require better grades, that is, making better grades "the rule." That's because the program stresses better school behavior and homework behavior, and usually, improvement in these two areas is enough to cause better grades. In order to help that happen, however, you can set up a separate small reward program for the good grades your child gets. First, set a fair standard for your child, perhaps one letter grade above his average. If the school uses traditional grades, you might choose a B- if he is a C- student. If the school uses percentages (0-100 per cent), you might pick 80 if

he normally gets low 70s. Then, you simply tell the child that every mark of 80 or above that he brings to you may be cashed in for a specific reward. For example, if your child should receive about a \$5 allowance each week, you might use the rule-privilege program for him to earn half of it. Then tell him that for every 80 or above grade he brings to you each Friday night, he can earn 50¢. Usually, children earn many "grades" during the course of a week, so this will give the child plenty of motivation to do well. Of course, you may choose any kind of reward, but experience shows that money works well. You may want to call your child's teacher(s) to get an idea of how many grades he receives during a typical week, such as for homework, quizzes, tests, papers, and book reports. Again, it is best to set the grade goal a little low at first, so the child has immediate success. Once the child meets your standard with most of his marks each week, you can raise the standard, but only in small steps. By the way, be careful about the size of the reward. One parent who tried this method owed his 10-year-old daughter \$80 after three weeks. Obviously, he had offered too great a reward for each good mark.

As with the rule-privilege program, write down the specifics of this reward program after you have discussed it with your child, and post it on the refrigerator.

## Homework: A Special Problem

Homework can be an especially emotional issue for many parents and children. Perhaps the child doesn't do it. Or she says she doesn't have any homework (when she really does). Or she puts it off and always leaves it until the last minute. Or she doesn't spend enough time doing it. Or she always needs help with her homework . . . and so on and so on.

Here's a way to attack this problem that usually works. Choose a very important privilege, one the child enjoys every day. Then, as part of your rule-privilege program, make a rule that your child must complete at least 30 minutes (or whatever the usual amount for a student your child's age) of homework before having the privilege. It's a good idea to have your child study in the same place every day. Create a nice study area, if possible, one free from noise and other people. The "no-homework" problem is avoided by requiring homework, regardless. You can take a large box and put it in the child's study area, filling it with educational materials: math workbooks, *National Geographic*

or other educational magazines, books, and CDs. If your child says she has no homework, she still must obey the rule and complete the required homework time, using materials from the box, if she wants the privilege for that day. Depending on the child, different amounts of checking the completed homework may be necessary. You may have to have her bring you the homework for “approval” before she is given the privilege. In other cases, little checking may be necessary.

The discipline you teach your child with the homework rule will go a long way toward helping her structure her time for important tasks in her life. The rule may seem strict, but your child will be helped for the rest of her life because of it. **A common homework rule is outlined for you on page 31.** Note that the rule applies only to school nights.

## How to Enforce the Daily Report Card

As already suggested, this program will discipline your child automatically. However, to make it work, you must see that the consequences set out beforehand are enforced consistently and unemotionally. If your child forgets to take a daily report card to school or loses it, it is no skin off your teeth. In both cases, the child will not present you with a report card, which is the same as all “Nos.” Because of this, the child does not get the privilege that night. Again, the report card is a ticket to be used to get the privilege. No ticket, no privilege! It’s that simple. You have not taken away the privilege; the child simply did not earn it.

Another important point about the enforcement: you should not ask your child for the report card. It is her responsibility to bring it to you to check. Until she does bring it to you, no privilege. When it is given to you, look at the daily card carefully, looking for any successes you can comment about. For example, “Jenny, I know you have had a difficult time in Mr. Smith’s class. You don’t like sci-

ence, and you sometimes feel Mr. Smith is unfair to you. Today you had all “Yes” checkmarks in his class. Congratulations! What did you do to help you to be successful today?” This kind of remark will help your child better understand her behavioral coping skills; she will be more likely to use them in the future if her successes are noticed and praised. After you have reviewed the card, if it is a good report for the day, praise the child for the success and tell her the privilege has been earned.

If the child has a bad report card, just inform her the privilege has not been earned for that day. That’s all. Nothing else, unless you want to

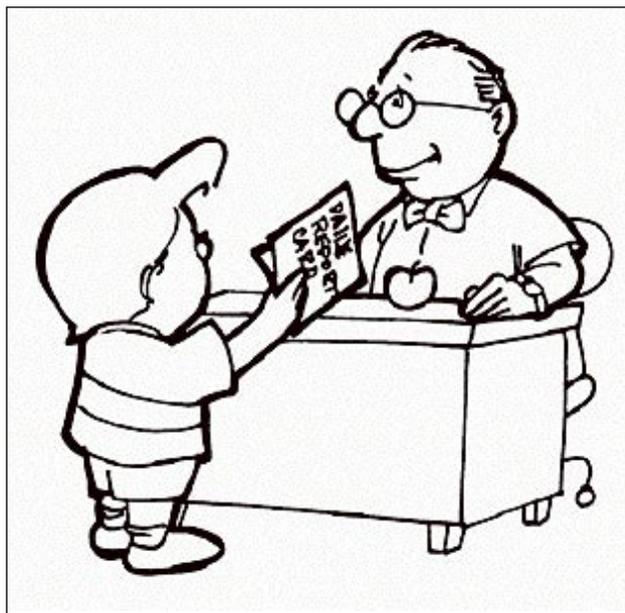
comment on some success on the card. If she argues or tries to explain how unfair a teacher was or the like, ignore her and repeat the consequence. If she ever tries to use the privilege even when she has not earned it, physically prevent it. See Chapter 1 for more about these situations.

You must be very consistent in enforcing the daily report card rule, and you must do so unemotionally. Put your emotional energy into enforcing the program exactly as it has been outlined here rather than getting upset. Showing anger may cause the program to fail. Be a

robot. Simply state the consequences to your child. Do not raise your voice, and do not put down the child or appear upset. A fact is a fact. Simply state it; that is all.

You’ll remember from Chapter 1 that a child’s behavior will often get worse when you try to change her behavior using a new method. Expect it. Don’t give up. If your child makes a fuss about the daily report card, consider yourself on the right track. Stick with it and get some support from others (a friend or the school’s guidance counselor) to help you through, if necessary.

If your child appears unaffected by not earning the selected privilege, she may be bluffing. Don’t fall for it. After a few weeks, if she continues to be unconcerned, then you should consider whether you have chosen a little-desired



It is the child’s responsibility to give the daily report card to the teacher.

# Family Contract

Post on Refrigerator

Rule	Privilege
<p>1. You must complete one hour of homework in your study area, with no distractions (music, TV, friends, etc.), every school night (Sunday through Thursday), to be checked before gaining the privilege.</p>	<p>1. You may use electronic things on school nights for 30 minutes (radio, TV, iPod, cell phone, computer).</p>

Growth privileges: School marching band, hospital volunteer work

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signatures: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

privilege. Or perhaps you started the program by demanding too much with your rule. In both cases, you can make changes in the program and continue.

One final point: You and your child should go to the refrigerator each time you allow a privilege or do not allow it, depending on the results of the daily report card. Look at the Family Contract and repeat the consequences, good or bad. This may appear to be a waste of your time, but it is the best way to stress the teaching part of the program. It makes earning or not earning a privilege less of a reward or punishment and more of a reminder about appropriate behavior. The practice, combined with unemotional, uncritical enforcement, becomes a real teaching experience and less of a punishment. So, however boring it may seem, make the trip to the refrigerator every time.

### Sample Daily Report Cards

The sample report cards **on pages 27 and 28** may be used as they are, or you may change them. Of course, you may make your own, with behaviors that are more in line with your child's needs. The card **on page 27** is designed



A parent must check the daily report card before allowing privileges.

for elementary school children, who usually have only one teacher. The second is for those who have two or more teachers. You should photocopy the card on colored paper so that it stands out from other papers and is easy to keep track of. Usually, the color of the card becomes a “short-hand” name for the daily report card, such as “your pink card.” Because the child will use a new card every day, it is important to have plenty of copies on hand, perhaps 50 cards to start the program. Since students usually “do business” in school on traditional 8 ½ “ x 11” paper, it is easier to use and not lose that size. You may want to copy on both sides of the paper to save money.

### Other Issues for Ensuring School Success

As stated earlier, this chapter is meant to help parents help their children in school; it is meant especially for frustrated parents whose other efforts have failed. The program that you have learned is one that offers a good chance of helping and is fairly easy to use. Most parents simply do not go to workshops or read lengthy books. So this chapter is a compromise, and even though it will probably help you, it is not the answer to all school problems. Your child's school performance is the result of many things, of which only a few are dealt with by this program. There are other principles you can use positively to help your child and to improve the chances this program will help. There are many, but let's look at three very important ones here.

- **Model learning and academic interest.** Modeling is the most powerful form of teaching and learning. Children follow the exemplary behavior of highly regarded adults. Or, in the words of the late psychologist Sidney Jourard, “Behavior begets its own kind.” So what does this mean for you and your child's school performance? Read at home. Often. Ask questions. Show an interest in learning new things. Share new knowledge. Discuss different kinds of jobs and how you decided on yours. It is common to hear parents complain about their child's lack of motivation in school, and yet, looking at the family's own educational motivation, it is easy to see where the child's attitudes come from. If a child grows up in an environment rich with healthy educational interest, he is more likely to have it too.

- **Expose your child to many different educational opportunities.** Like the above principle, this is quite obvious. Learning does not occur only in school. Life is filled with learning experiences: music lessons, gymnastics, YMCA visits, trips to battlefields and museums, hobbies, and travel. Have you taken your child on a trip to your local children’s museum or a historic site such as Williamsburg? Both places can be educational as well as fun. Turn off the TV—don’t let your child experience life passively. Fill your child’s life with direct involvement. Get the idea?
- **Support your child’s school.** Join the PTA. Go to parents’ night. Tell the principal and teachers that you appreciate their hard work. Give them suggestions to help your child. Teachers rarely get good feedback from parents. The vast majority of teachers are very committed and want to help their students. Unfortunately, many of these caring teachers are burned out because no one cares about their efforts. Teachers get too many hassles and not enough praise and support.

Harold Stevenson, psychology professor at the University of Michigan, has reported on a cross-cultural study of schools. Why, for example, are Japanese schools more successful and lacking in many of the problems compared to American schools? Stevenson’s study was large in scope, studying all parts of the school experience. The differences all pointed toward one thing: parental involvement. Japanese parents take an active role in their schools—very active compared to American parents. So get involved. I know a parent who gets one day of vacation each month at work and who uses one half of that day volunteering at her child’s school, helping the librarian design a display, tutoring, grading tests, and planning field trips. What if every parent made such a commitment?

As I write this section, the front page of my daily newspaper is reporting on parents protesting the strip search of their sons and daughters following a robbery in a school. By the newspaper account, at least, the search was done respectfully. The superintendent of the school district is being called on to fire the teachers involved in the incident. A typical event in this country. Meanwhile, drug use, personal attacks, and truancy are common occurrences in our schools.

We don’t support our schools, perhaps, as much as we should in this country. We continually expect more and more from them while at the same time we closely examine their every move, stripping them of the powers to ensure that our children stay on the right track. I am not hopeful this overall picture is changing in this country, but your own personal involvement can make a difference for your child. For your child’s sake, do anything and everything you can to lend support to your child’s school.

## Special Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) grants federal funding to states to ensure that children with one or more of 13 specified disabilities receive free appropriate education. Under the law, school districts must prepare an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for each child eligible for services under IDEA, specifying all special education and “related services” needed by the child. Unfortunately, because states must label these children as “handicapped” in order to receive special funding, the children receive labels such as “behaviorally–emotionally handicapped,” “learning disabled,” and others. Although such labels can be harmful to children, in many cases, the advantages of special education services can far outweigh the disadvantages of the label. Often, a child who is experiencing many school problems can be helped by special education services.

How can you receive this assistance? Parents may simply ask the school to test their child for possible special education. As soon as the school receives your request, the child is usually observed in the classroom, and information is gathered from the child’s school records. If it looks as if the child has some special school problems, the student is tested by the school psychologist, usually within four to six weeks. After the testing is completed, the psychologist and other educators hold a meeting with the child’s parents to decide if the child can be helped by special services. If so, an IEP is drawn up at that meeting. Quite simply, it is a list of things the school will do to help the child.

This meeting is also a good time to ask the school to put your School Motivation Program into the IEP. The school, then, can make sure that it is carried out in a way that helps your child. When a child is in special education and the School Motivation Program is part of the child’s plan, the school cooperates and works hard to make it

successful. This special attention does help. If your child is already in special education, it's easy to add the School Motivation Program. Simply call your child's school and ask for another IEP meeting to be scheduled. When you attend the meeting, ask for the program to become part of your child's plan.

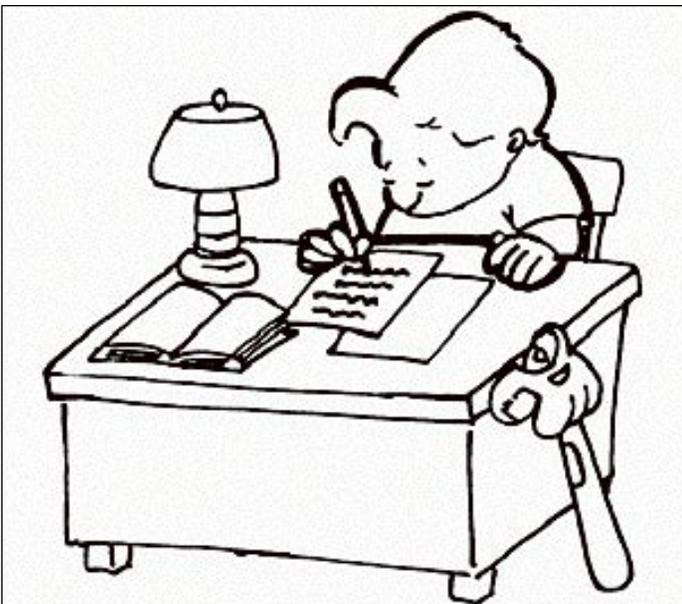
## This Isn't Working . . .

This program usually works with most children, but there are times when problems are not helped by it. Often, when the program seems to have failed, it is because it hasn't been used correctly. If this is the case, you may wish to talk to the school guidance counselor or some other child professional to make sure you are following through correctly with the program. Sometimes, simple changes can get the program working. For example, you may not be using an important enough privilege, or your enforcement may not be consistent and unemotional. Give the program some time to work, at least six weeks. You can expect to have to make some changes in the program—that is, do some fine-tuning. You can also expect your child to test the program. In fact, many children's behavior gets worse at first. This really is quite normal, because people (including children) do not like to change their behavior. We like to continue behaving in familiar ways. Children will act out

against new methods to try to get you to stop and to go back to your familiar ways of handling their school behavior. Stick with the program. If you stick with it, in time the new method will become familiar and more acceptable to the child.

If you have given the program your very best try and your child continues to have problems at school, then it is time to consult a professional: school principal, psychologist, counselor. If a child does not respond to this method, there may be an important problem in the child's life, which is causing the child's misbehavior in school. There are many kinds of influences in a child's life that can affect school behavior. A good professional can help you look at possible negative influences and take action to improve the situation. After you have dealt with these factors, then it may be appropriate to try the rule-privilege method again. A professional can give you guidance.

Good luck!!! So start now, putting your frustration about your child's school problems into carrying out the school motivation program you have just read about. Then you will not need luck; you will make it work.



Good behavior at school will pay off!

## About the Author



Richard L. Munger has spent 25 years as an administrator in public community mental health. He is a practicing child psychologist in North Carolina and formerly Associate Professor of Psychiatry, John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii. He received his Ph.D in Educational Psychology from the University of Michigan. He is the author of two professional books, *Child Mental Health Practice from the Ecological Perspective* and *The Ecology of Troubled Children*, and two books for parents, *Changing Children's Behavior Quickly* and *Changing Children's Behavior by Changing the People, Places, and Activities in Their Lives*, which is also published by Boys Town Press.