

One-page summary: Starting school (5-7 years)

What's normal at this age

- Self-control runs low when tired or stressed, so after school can be rough.
- Recommended sleep: 10-13 hours a day at 5, and 9-12 hours from 6.
- Lies to cover up broken rules: most 3- to 8-year-olds did in one study.
- Still learning to handle big feelings, a skill that can be taught.
- Can reason through a conflict when an adult guides the talk.

What works, and why

- Noticing and praising what goes right.
- Natural and logical consequences, kept small, calm and related.
- Consistency: consequences small enough to carry out every time.
- Solving disputes together: you guide the talk, children find the solution.
- Inviting the truth: tell your child you'll be glad to hear it.
- The same school-day routine, morning and evening; routines are linked with how well children adjust.

What backfires

- Harsh punishment: in one study, 3- and 4-year-olds at a punitive school lied more, and better.
- Yelling, threats and shaming.
- Labels like 'so smart' or 'bad kid' instead of feedback on how they went about it.
- Spanking: linked with quick compliance but also with more aggression.

Things you can say

"You worked hard all day. Snack first, talk later."

"You were cold without your jacket. What would help you remember tomorrow?"

"I'd be really glad if you told me what happened."

"You both want it. What idea could work for both of you?"

"You kept trying until it worked."

"I yelled earlier, and I'm sorry. Let's start again."