



4-H School-Age Child Care  
University of California Cooperative Extension

# PARENT STYLES

## Tips for Busy Parents

### PLAYING BY THE RULES

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*Seven to ten year olds are very “rule bound”. Parenting can be difficult because school-age children live, eat and breathe rules.*

#### **Why are 7-10 year olds so “rule bound?”**

The school-age child’s mental abilities expand at the same time that the brain becomes much more mature in both structure and function. Around age 7 children begin to order, classify and apply rules to various situations. They can mentally add and subtract. They spend many hours organizing the doll corner or lining up and grouping all the toy cars or miniature play figures.

Over a period of several years, school-age children are preoccupied with rules. Through rules they get a sense of order and security to their rapidly changing world. Seven-to-ten year olds become frustrated with any disregard for rules, asserting themselves vehemently on the unfairness or unjustness of not sticking to rules.

Understanding this “rulebound” period of school-agers can eliminate many needless conflicts between parents and children as well as among groups of children or siblings.

Consistent enforcement of rules can help both parents and children.

#### **How can parents work with the rulebound child?**

★ **Respect the school-age child’s need for rules.** Do not belittle it or try to circumvent it for your own convenience. Also, avoid trying to reason with a school-ager about flexibility in rules. You only end up frustrating yourself and the child.

★ **Decide rules with your child whenever possible.** Set rules in advance. Begin social situations, including shopping trips, special events, and games by deciding on the rules. State them clearly.

★ **Provide activities that allow your child to create a sense of order.** Do things together that require ordering or classifying such as organizing a kitchen cupboard, sorting a money box or an activity like the one of the reverse side.

#### **Use the following criteria for making rules.** All rules need to be:

- understandable by the children
- appropriate for developmental age of the children
- realistic, necessary & enforceable
- positive in nature
- short and easy to remember
- specific in expected behavior and in consequences

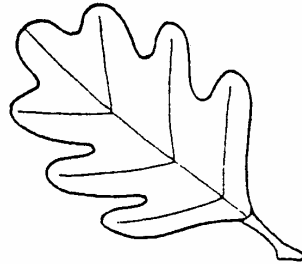
**Resource: School-age Notes Jan. 1985**

**Collect, Classify & Cultivate a New Interest**

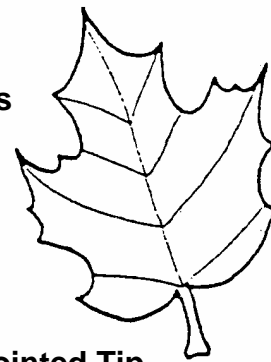
School-age children think in concrete ways and like to order, classify and apply rules to various situations. The following activity will give you a chance to help your child in these areas.

**What You'll Need:**

- Paper Bag
- Newspaper
- Heavy Books
- Paper, Glue
- Leaves



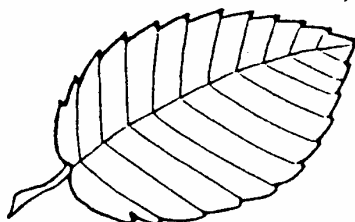
**Lobed Edges**



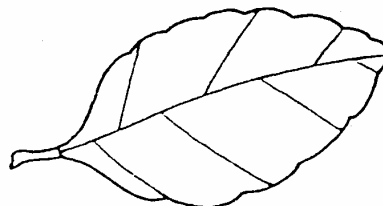
**Pointed Tip**

**What to Do:**

- ☆ Take your child on a walk. Collect a variety of leaves from bushes, shrubs or trees. If you know the names of the plants, share this with your child.
- ☆ When you return, help your child classify the leaves you collected according to their appointed categories. Ask your child to think of other ways the leaves could be sorted.
- ☆ You can preserve your leaves by laying them between sheets of newspaper and stacking books on them to make them flat. After a couple of days, the leaves should be flattened and dried. You then can help your child make a leaf collage by gluing the leaves to construction paper. (If you want to preserve the leaves for a longer time, cover them with clear contact paper.)



**Serrated Edges**



**Alternating Veins**