

Other Kids' Rudeness

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Teaching proper manners to your own children is one thing, but correcting rudeness in a friend's or a stranger's child is quite another. You are seemingly faced with a double-edged sword: Correct the child and risk angering or embarrassing the other parent, or remain quiet and risk confusing your children. But if you phrase your request well, you can enforce good manners without catching heat. For example--you, your girlfriend and the two girls are at the park playing together, and you notice that your friend's child is being bossy and pushy, and that your child is beginning to mimic the rude behavior. But, your girlfriend is ignoring the situation and it's getting out of hand. Instead of saying something directly to your friend's kid, it may be more effective to tell your daughter (in the presence of your friend and her child), "Kelsey, you know better than to push in front of the other kids to get on the slide--please take your turn." I'm sure that both girls and your friend will get the message, and you've given it in a way that doesn't embarrass anyone.

When correcting other people's children (as well as your own) it's a good idea to:

Keep the embarrassment to a minimum

Be compassionate, yet firm in your discipline

Pick your rudeness battles, letting the little things go

Keep it positive: say "Use two hands" rather than "Stop being so careless with your glass of milk!"

Always comment upon dangerous behavior or rudeness that is aimed at belittling or bullying other children

Finally, talk with your children about their friends' manners or lack thereof. Let them know that what is allowed in other people's homes may not be allowed in yours, such as name calling ("you're stupid") or certain phrases ("that sucks!"). Make it clear that the rules of your home govern their behavior wherever they are--at school, friends' homes, the park, restaurant or at the mall."