

Home (at yours and others!) for the Holidays

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The holidays are a wonder-filled time of the year wherein friends and family exchange gifts and visits. Because children with learning differences often have difficulty making transitions, they are often anxious about visiting other's homes, and also may have difficulty playing the role of "host" to holiday visitors.

This article is designed to assist mom as she prepares the child for the holiday festivities. Discuss these important social obligations and expectations with him **prior to** the visits and provide quick "refresher course" hours before the visit begins. By preparing the child and being pro-active, you are less likely to be required to **react** to misbehavior!

Ensure that your child is a welcomed holiday visitor

In order to be a welcome guest, the child should follow these **Do's and Don'ts**:

- **Be punctual**
Arrive on time. If you are unavoidably late, call and explain. If you arrive early, don't go to the host's home until the prescribed time. Take a walk.
- **Dress appropriately**
Whenever we dress, we should consider the following things:
 - Weather
 - Activity
 - FashionYour child's apparel for a holiday toboggan party should be very different than if he were attending a pre-Nutcracker reception at Grandma's. Help him to decide what to wear and guide him in this decision.
- **Help the host**
Offer to assist in some way or just join in if folks are moving chairs, setting the table, etc. A guest can also assist a host by circulating and "getting the party moving." Circulate! Hosts always appreciate this.
- **Don't make yourself at home**
Ask permission before using the phone, TV, computer, etc.
- **No snooping**
Reinforce the fact that it is **not** appropriate to look in drawers or cabinets. Also review some appropriate (and inappropriate) questions that the child might ask.
- **Enjoy the food**
But remind him that the food is for **everyone**. Tell him that it is inappropriate to "hang around" the food table. Get your food -- then move away.
- **Leave the function when others leave**
Avoid being the first or last guest to depart. Always thank the host -- even if it is a relative.

Ensure that your child is a gracious host

Holiday time also requires kids to welcome friends and family into their home. You will want to review the following points with your child.

- **Always ask permission from mom or dad before inviting a guest.**
- **As the host it is the child's job to introduce the family.**

Review the socially acceptable methods of introduction ("Mom, this is my friend, Danny. He is in my gym class and he lives near the fire station.").

- **The host should explain the "house rules" to the guest.**

Each family has its own culture (e.g., "Nobody is allowed in Dad's workshop" or "Don't feed candy to the dog" or "No food in the living room"). The host should politely explain these rules. Again, this proactive strategy may prevent significant problems.

- **The host should assist with the extra work that accompanies a visit.**

The child should be extra helpful at mealtime, etc., when hosting someone.

- **It's the host's job -- not mom's or dad's job -- to entertain the guest.**

The child should find things to do and should pre-plan the activities.

Enjoy the holidays! Shower the people you love with love and during this special, much needed season, let's all remember the words of George Harrison... "And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make." God bless us everyone.

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