

# Caring for... your school aged child (5-9 years)

Caring for children is challenging and it's hard to know what is and isn't normal behaviour.

Below are some normal behaviours for school aged children, with tips on how to manage them.

1

## Fighting and aggression between siblings and/or other children

Disagreements and fights among children are common. Children learn social skills and empathy with their peers at home and at school. This is how they learn to connect, play and grow. By helping children understand what's going on, we can help them control their own needs and wants, see both sides of a situation and regulate their emotions – being able to feel and think at the same time.

### Try:

- Stop the fight, keep your cool and tell your children you'll talk about it later when things settle down.
- Have family rules. This helps children learn what behaviour is and isn't OK.
- After a fight, help your children to solve their problem for the future. Ask them what they think the problem is, what they want to happen and brainstorm solutions together. For example:
  - » 'Is it fair for you to have [computer] all the time?' 'Do you think [timed] arrangement might work?'
  - » 'Let me set the timer so you and your [sibling] can take turns.'
- Help your child talk about their friendship troubles and learn to stand up for themselves, without aggression.
- It's important to tell your children: 'It's OK to be angry, but it's not OK to hit. We need to keep everyone safe.'



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## 2

### Misbehaving at school

Listen to your child's problem. Try to understand what is causing their behaviour.

#### Try:

- Saying:
  - » 'Your teacher called me about something that happened at school today. I want to help. Tell me what happened.'
  - » 'When you behave this way [whatever the behaviour might be], let's talk about it, can you tell me what is bothering you?'

## 3

### Swearing

School aged children might swear to express negative feelings, get a reaction from parents, or fit in socially. Some children might not fully understand a swear word's meaning, but they do understand words can hurt or offend others.

#### Try

- Staying calm and clearly explaining why the word they used is not OK.
- Acknowledge it's OK to feel certain emotions e.g. anger, but talk to your child about other ways to feel accepted by their peers. This could include using another 'cool' word or expression. For example, tell your child:
  - » 'I can see you are really angry, but that word is not an OK word to use. How about saying you are feeling really frustrated or angry instead?'
- Praising your child when you see them dealing more appropriately with their anger or frustration.

## 4

### Technology use

Technology, including gaming devices, ipads and the internet, has changed the way children learn at school and interact with their family, friends and peers. While it's important children know how to use different devices, boundaries on technology use should be set from a young age and adapted as they grow and develop.

#### Try:

- Have a family agreement/rules around the use of technology, including internet access and social media.
- Ensure computers, gaming devices and mobile devices are used in shared areas of the house, so an adult can monitor children at all times.
- Engage in age-appropriate conversations about online safety from an early age, to promote healthy online boundaries and assertive online behaviours.

## 5

### Connecting with pre-teens

As children get older, their interests change and are often influenced by their peers and the environment around them. It's important parents stay connected, show interest and engage with their growing child.

#### Try:

- Show interest by encouraging your child to expand on what they're saying, and explore their views, opinions, feelings, expectations, and/or plans.
- Listen without judgement, interruption or correcting.
- Be present with your child – stop what you're doing and focus on the moment. For example:
  - » 'I noticed when you weren't able to ... How can I help you?'

For more information or advice, visit reputable parenting websites such as:

- **Kids Health**  
[kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au](http://kidshealth.schn.health.nsw.gov.au)
- **Raising Children**  
[raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)
- **Triple P**  
[triplep-parenting.net.au](http://triplep-parenting.net.au)
- **Family Connect and Support**  
[familyconnectsupport.dcj.nsw.gov.au](http://familyconnectsupport.dcj.nsw.gov.au)
- **Parent Line**  
[parentline.org.au](http://parentline.org.au) (NSW) or  
free call 1300 1300 52
- **eSafety**  
[esafety.gov.au](http://esafety.gov.au)

**Don't let frustrations escalate – reach out for help when you need it.**