

Charting Your Family Rules – Advice from Jeannette Lofas

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Get it in writing! Because rules are so important to a comfortable, well-run home, I always recommend writing up a formal list and displaying it in a prominent place. When expectations are clear, children have a lot more success meeting them. Remember to phrase the rules in positive, rather than negative, terms.

The Clark family is made up of Mary and Don Clark; Mary's fifteen-year-old son, Lee, who lives permanently in the house; and Don's children, Beth, twelve, and Emma, ten, who come every other weekend, as do many children of divorce. Here is how the Clarks formulated the rules for their home.

Family Rules for the Clark Family

MANNERS

- We say hello, goodbye, please, and thank you.
- We respect each other and the things in our house.
- We put things in their place and leave common areas in order.
- We respond in a positive manner when adults ask questions or ask us to do something.
- We work as a team to get jobs done.
- We answer the phone and take messages for one another.
- We let others know when we are leaving the house and when we will be back.

ACTIVITY CALENDAR

- We write all upcoming events on the Clark Family Calendar (e.g., the girls' days to visit, games, sleepovers. Birthdays, adults' night out, and parties).
- Each person is responsible for writing down his/her own activities.

REGULAR SCHEDULE AND CHORES

Lee's School Mornings

1. Set the alarm the night before and leave coat, book bag, sports equipment, ready to go by the door.
2. Get up. Put feet on the floor after shutting off alarm. (No using snooze alarm.)
3. Bathroom: Hang up towels after use. Make sure bathroom is in order. Keep sink clean of toothpaste, hair, etc.
4. Make bed and straighten room.
5. Breakfast: Put stuff away after use, put dishes in dishwasher, and leave area as found.
6. Leave for school.

Lee's After School Hours

1. Hang up coat, put away equipment.
2. Some R&R, depending on how much homework and what chores have to be done.

3. Homework. If grades go down again, Mom to look at homework every day.
4. Parents call to tell kids their estimated time of arrival and what they expect kids to do before they get home.

Lee's After-School Chores

1. Empty dishwasher.
2. Feed dog.
3. Make sure room is straight before parents come home.
4. Do own sheets, towels, and laundry on Monday.
5. Dust downstairs on Wednesday.
6. Vacuum downstairs on Thursday.

Dinner Time

- All participate in meal prep and clean-up.

Bed Time

1. Say goodnight to other family members
2. Mom and Lee talk for a few minutes before he goes to bed.

Family's Weekend Mornings

1. Lee can stay up until 11:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 9:30 p.m. on Sunday, unless there is no school the next day.
2. Beth can stay up until 10:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.
3. Emma can stay up until 9:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday.
4. Allow parents to sleep in. Entertain ourselves until they are up. If bedroom door is closed, do not disturb.
5. Bathroom: Hang up towels after use. Make sure bathroom is in order. Keep sink clean of toothpaste, hair, etc.
6. Make bed and straighten room.
7. Breakfast: At least one weekend day, make a special family breakfast of pancakes or waffles. Put stuff away after use, put dishes in dishwasher, and leave area as found.
8. Planning the day: At breakfast or later during morning, roughly plan our day. Plan time for chores and activities with friends and family. All events, like practices and parties, are put on the calendar in advance.
9. Time for parents and time for kids. Some planned activities with children, some with one child, some for adults alone.
10. Parents go out on Saturday night.

Family's Weekend Chores

Dad: Check girls' weekend homework and school projects.

Lee: Keeps room clean, helps with outside yard work as needed.

Beth: Keeps room clean, feeds dog, dusts and vacuums playroom with Emma, helps dad with outside yard work as needed.

Emma: Keeps room clean, helps Mary water plants, dusts and vacuums playroom with Beth, helps dad with outside yard work as needed.

***Family's Weekend
Meals***

- Friday night is pizza night; all help.
- Family has as many meals together as possible. All take turns doing different chores as scheduled.

Charting Your Family Rules.rtf Feb 2008