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party. This honors the occasion.

- Parents of young hosts and young guests should be specific with their children about expectations. “Don’t say, ‘Be on your best behavior,’” Gregory says. “Say, ‘I expect you to greet your guests at the door and thank them for coming.’” Role-play various possible situations with them.
- Don’t invite more children than you can manage. This will help you retain the grace and stamina to encourage continued good party manners throughout the event. Does your child’s school have an “invite everyone” policy? “That is ridiculous!” Gregory says. “It is prohibitively expensive, RSVPs will not work with such a large guest list, and finding a large-enough location becomes very difficult.” The rationale to include everyone is to avoid hurt feelings, something Gregory calls unrealistic. “Life isn’t always fair, and children know this.”
- If gifts are given, they should be opened at the party — no whisking them away for later, Gregory says. “Part of the joy we have in giving gifts is seeing the look of joy on the recipient’s face. The person giving the gift is trying to please you.” Don’t want to deal with gifts at the party? Just specify “no gifts!”
- Help kids practice receiving gifts graciously. Remind them to focus on the giver’s motivation. Practice handling situations, such as what they should say if they open a duplicate gift.
- Kids of all ages should write thank-you notes, not just for the gifts, but to thank the guests for being part of the occasion. “The biggest present,” Gregory says, “is the presence of each other.”

*Paula Becker is a Seattle freelance writer and has three children.*

## RESOURCES

[The PoliteChild](#) offers classes for schools, scout troops and other groups, as well as a guide — *Party Manners Worth Celebrating* — downloadable for \$4.95

[Final Touch Finishing School](#)

## Books

*Emily Post’s The Guide to Good Manners for Kids* by Peggy Post and Cindy Post Senning, Ed.D.

*Miss Manners’ Guide to Rearing Perfect Children* by Judith Martin (older but widely available used or from libraries)

