

# 7 Basic Things All Parents Should Teach Their Children

The internet has brought us many things, not the least of which is an escalation in parenting theories and “Mommy Wars.”

But while it’s worthwhile to explore the pros and cons of attachment parenting, Tiger Moms, or free-range concepts, do we get too caught up in these theories? And in so doing, do we forget the basics every parent should pass on to a child in order to ensure that he or she becomes a flourishing adult?

If such is the case, then we would be well-served to examine what Noah Webster had to say on the subject of parenting. Known as the “Father of American Scholarship and Education” for the prevalence his textbooks had in the lives of early Americans, Webster had eight children of his own, a fact which adds practical experience to his academic knowledge on the subject. To share this wealth, Webster [penned a brief paragraph](#) outlining the seven basics every parent must impart to his or her child. These include the following:

1. **Obedience** – “Teach thy children obedience,” Webster implored. Unfortunately, [today’s mantra](#) runs more along the lines of “Teach thy child to be thy friend.” Using this pattern, many parents offer suggestions to their children, always coaxing and [rarely following through with discipline](#). As a result, American children are “[immersed in a culture of disrespect](#).”

2. **Temperance**, another word for self-control (particularly in food and drink), is the second item Webster tells parents to instill in their children. Given that childhood obesity rates have [tripled since the 1970s](#), it seems many parents are foregoing this instruction today.

But lessons in temperance go far beyond overeating. Are we training our children to approach their food with enthusiasm

or [pickiness](#)? And when it comes to eating in public, have we taught them to [control their behavior](#) to make the experience pleasant for others as well as themselves?

**3. Justice** – Contemporary America connects this word with social justice, a concept which encourages fairness and equity in everything. But in Webster's day, justice held [connotations](#) of righteousness, morality, and honesty. Are we training our children to value what is [true and morally right](#), or are we teaching them a new and [trendy type of moral fundamentalism](#)?

**4. Diligence in Useful Occupations** – Normal parents want their child to do well in school and get into a good college in order to one day get a good job. To achieve this, many parents allow their children to [skip out on chores](#), arguing that kids have more important things to do.

But does this work against children? If we want them to be gainfully and successfully employed in their adult years, is the best training gained through the instillation of a strong work ethic through the basic chores of home?

**5. Science** is Webster's fifth essential, something modern parents, teachers, and politicians can enthusiastically support! In fact, science curriculum has already seen a huge push in recent years, even at the expense of other subjects like history and civics.

But according to Webster, science isn't limited to the realms of biology, chemistry, and physics. In his [1828 Dictionary](#), Webster defines science as "knowledge, or certain knowledge; the comprehension or understanding of truth or facts by the mind." In a day when few college freshmen can discern between [fact and opinion](#), do parents need to focus more on instilling the "science" of truth and knowledge in their children?

**6. Social Virtues** – "Teach them the social virtues," Webster exhorts, "and fortify the precepts by thine own example." Are we teaching our children the importance of cultivating good character not only for their own sakes, but also for the good

of others? Furthermore, are parents careful to practice the same virtues they encourage their children to hold?

**7. Religion** – I once had a new mother explain to me that she and her husband weren't going to force their daughter into religion. Instead, they were going to let her choose for herself and make her own way. Such a practice sounds great... but is it really?

Not according to Webster. He declares, "Science and virtue will make them respectable in this life – religion and piety alone can secure to them happiness in the life to come."

Judging from contemporary [statistics](#), however, this happiness isn't limited to the afterlife. In fact, religious individuals are more likely to volunteer, demonstrate generosity, be family-oriented, and express greater happiness in life than those who are not.

Parenting advice abounds in our world, so much so, that it can be quite overwhelming to figure out which approach to choose. Would today's parents – and their children – be better served by returning to the simple, straightforward advice that Webster presented so many years ago?

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