

## Remember Food Safety When Decorating Easter Eggs

The main concern when dealing with eggs is Salmonella. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports 40,000 cases of Salmonella each year, and they estimate that up to 20 times that many go unreported.

To decrease the risk of Salmonella, cook eggs properly and keep hands clean so as to not cross-contaminate other foods. Make sure the eggs are not broken because cracked eggs could be contaminated. People who raise chickens should gather eggs at least once or more each day. Keep eggs refrigerated at all times. If having an Easter egg hunt, only allow eggs to be out of the refrigerator for two hours or less, or make a separate batch of eggs just for the hunt.

Another option is to use plastic eggs for the Easter egg hunts and fill the eggs with candy or money for a special treat.

Eggs can be decorated with magic markers, paint, glitter, or even sequins. If you are dyeing the eggs, wash them in a mild detergent solution before decorating and give a light oil coating to help color adhere more evenly. Be sure to use a food-safe dye.

Commercial egg decorating dyes are food-safe, as is food coloring added to a water-vinegar mix. Organic dyes are another option. Tea or coffee will provide a tan or brownish shade. Beet or cranberry juice will produce red dye. For green, use the water from cooked spinach leaves, or for blue, use blueberry juice.

One of the advantages of the Easter egg tradition is that the decorated eggs can be consumed. Hard-boiled eggs in the shell should be used within a week, or within 2–3 days if the shell has been removed. Uncooked egg contents from hollowed eggs should be used within a day or two.

*Karen Blakeslee*

## Protect Family Time

Saying “no” to a child can be difficult for parents, but it may be best for the child and the family.

Children have a lot of activities to choose from, and they can easily become too involved. Protecting some of their time is important. Like adults, children need down time to get adequate rest and re-energize.

Protecting family time is important, too, because the family serves as a support system for each member of the family.

For parents, knowing that they should say no doesn't make it easier to say no. Families can be particularly vulnerable at the beginning of the new school year, when children may want to sign up for more activities than they can participate in.

Consider each request, but try to make one decision at a time. When a child is under the age of eight, it's generally best for parents to make such decisions. As a child gets older, asking them to help identify the negatives and positives in choosing an activity or additional responsibility can help them learn decision-making skills.

Involving children in the decision-making process also can be helpful in moving them toward accepting the decision that is made. It also lets them know that their request was considered.

The fact that the child already is participating in another sport, musical group, or youth development opportunity (like 4-H or Scouts) needs to be weighed when considering additional activities. If adding another activity means interrupting family mealtime three nights a week, adding the activity may not be in the best interest of the child or the family.

*Charlotte Shoup Olsen*

## PARENTS CORNER

### Honesty

Cheating and dishonesty are more prevalent in our children than we would like. To instill the value of honesty, we need to talk about it, model it, and explain why it is an important value. Honest people are trustworthy, sincere, and genuine people.

#### Ways to help your child value honesty:

Encourage family members to be honest with themselves. Honestly acknowledge feelings. Honestly admit to successes and mistakes.

Do not overreact when your child lies to you. Children will lie if they fear your reaction.

Have family members discuss situations they observe at work, school, and on television where people act honestly and dishonestly.

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### Promote Healthy Eating Habits

Parents frequently become concerned with how much, or how little, their child seems to eat. Add the pressure from health and science groups who tell us that good nutrition habits start when our children are young, and parenting gets even tougher. But according to recent research, getting tough doesn't seem to be the answer. What works best is setting a good example for your child.

While most children don't eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, a study reported in the January 2002, *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* asked what role parents played in the situation. The researchers found that parents' own fruit and vegetable intake may encourage young girls (the study looked only at girls and their families) to eat more fruits and vegetables. However, parents who put pressure on their children to eat more fruits and vegetables had the opposite effect—girls who received pressure to eat more fruits and vegetables actually tended to eat fewer servings. For parents, the old saying is accurate—our actions often speak louder than our words.

*Sandy Procter*

### Tips to Be More Productive

Are you an early bird or a night owl? What time of day do you have the most energy? That time—your personal prime time—is when you are most productive. Take advantage of your prime time to do important and difficult tasks. You will do a better job, and time will pass much faster.

Use bits and pieces of time. It helps to keep a pen, paper and something to read with you. Many tasks can be done in a few minutes, so use that waiting time.

*Megan Mayo and Katey Walker*

### Homework Through the Years

Experts say the key to developing good homework habits is to make them regular and reasonable. Here is what you can expect from children at different ages, according to Diane Heacox, author of *Up from Under Achievement*:

Grade in School	How Long	How Often
Preschool to Grade 1	Up to 15 min.	3 days a week
Grades 2-3	Up to 20 min.	5 days a week
Grades 4-5	Up to 30 min.	5 days a week
Grades 6-8	Up to 1 hour	6 days a week

#### To help your child improve his or her homework skills:

Study together. While your child does schoolwork, read, study something new, or catch up with some work. Be available to help your child.

Meet with your child at the beginning of the quarter or semester and help break down large assignments into smaller assignments. Monitor progress.

Together, set boundaries about interruptions, such as phone calls and visitors who drop in.

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