

Highlights®

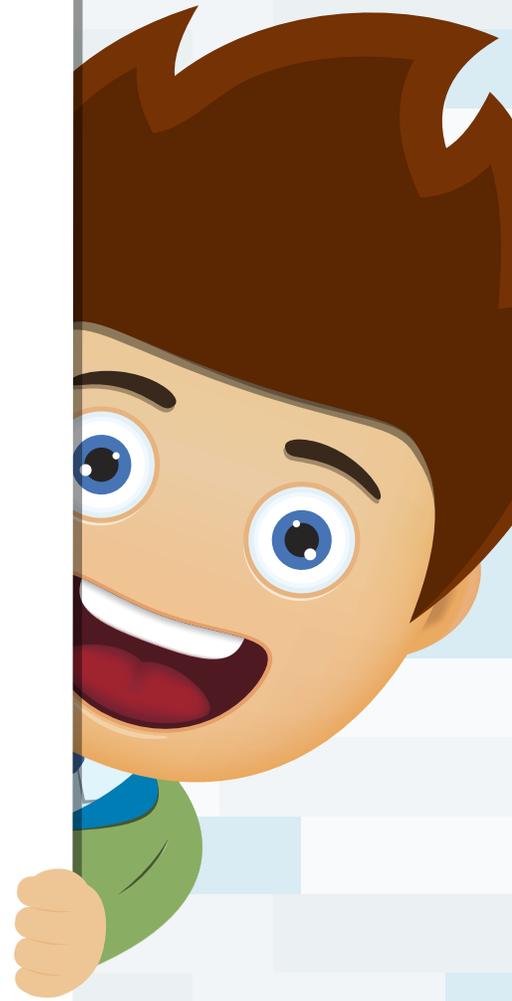
The  
**State**  
of the  
**Kid**™

**2015**

DISCIPLINE

INDULGENCE

COMPETITION





**E**very product or initiative at Highlights begins and ends with our commitment to helping kids grow to become their best selves: curious, creative, confident, and caring. Our annual State of the Kid poll—now in its eighth year—is no exception.

With this survey, we give kids a national platform to share their thoughts on their experiences growing up today. At Highlights, we believe that listening to kids and seeking to understand their perspectives are key to serving them better. Our survey results, as well as the thousands of letters and emails we receive monthly from our readers (all answered!), inform our work like nothing else.

Over the years, our survey has covered a variety of topics important to children and families. Subjects include reading habits, bullying, gender roles, chores, school and homework, and parental distraction. This year, we asked kids ages six to twelve to comment on discipline, indulgence, and participation trophies. As in the past, their responses were sometimes funny, consistently thoughtful and honest, and unfailingly informative. We're grateful to be given another lens through which we can view and understand childhood today, and for the reminder to listen—actively listen—to our children.

We're excited to share this glimpse into the lives of children, and we hope that you find what kids have to say as fascinating as we did.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Christine French Cully'.

**Christine French Cully**  
Editor in Chief, **Highlights**® magazine

# Purpose & Methodology

## PURPOSE

Each year for our **State of the Kid™** report, we try to select topics that allow us to give parents, educators, and caregivers insight into how kids view the world they live in. We also look for issues that will be of interest to associations and institutions that serve children and families. This year's topics—discipline, indulgence, and competition—meet all of these criteria.

Most stories about discipline highlight the method of discipline (time out or spanking, for example), but we wanted to probe how kids feel when they are disciplined and how they gauge its effectiveness. We then took it a step further and asked kids how they would discipline their own children.

To explore the idea of indulgence, we wanted to see if today's parents simply give their kids whatever they ask for (within reason, of course), but we're happy to note that many families believe that children need to wait or earn things they want. Yet we acknowledge that kids are kids, and asked how they get their parents to give them what they want.

Finally, at a time when kids are competing for almost everything, we thought it would be interesting to explore how children feel about participating in competitions, to see if they think everyone deserves recognition or only the winners.

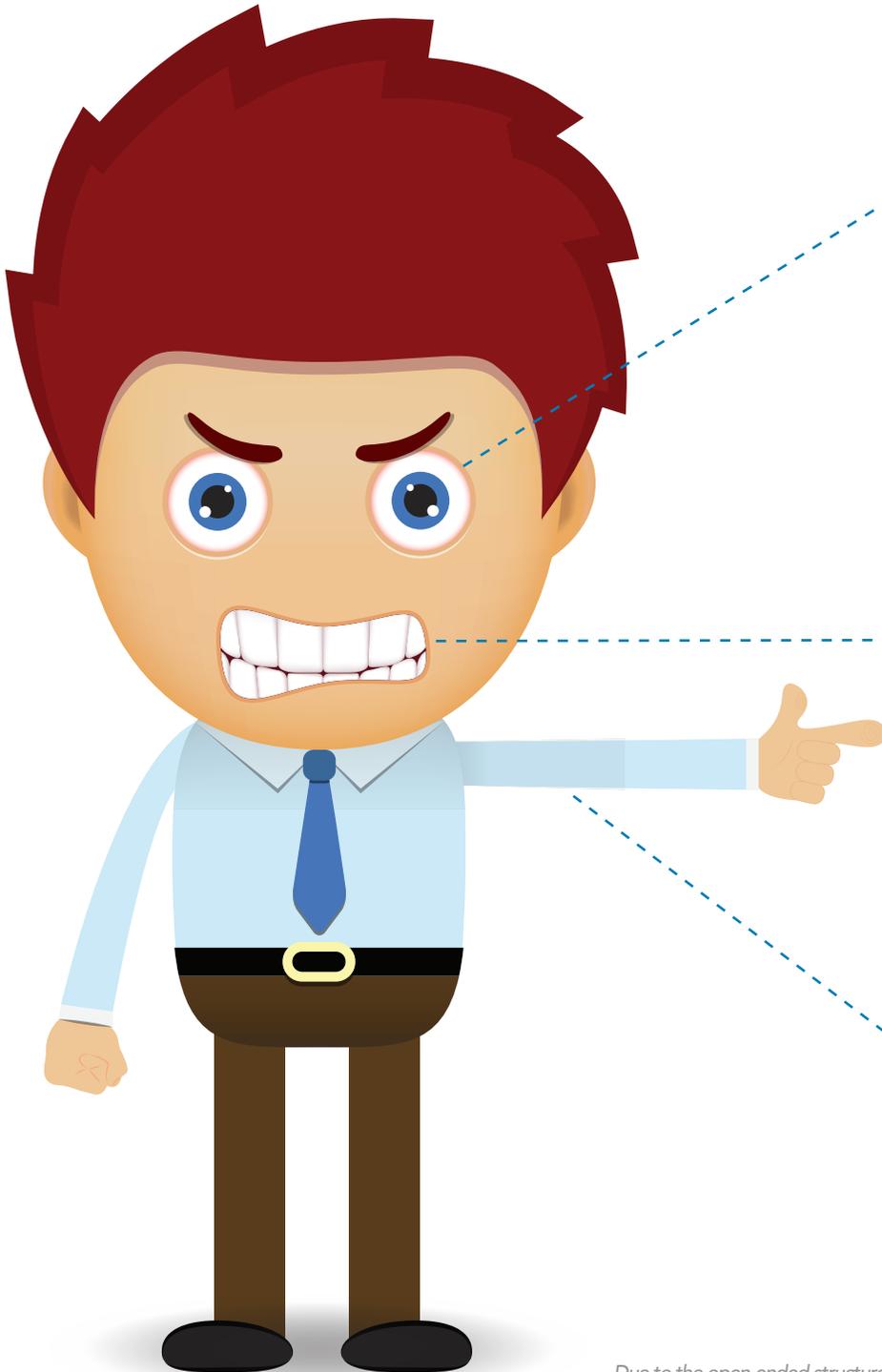
## METHODOLOGY

As we did for **State of the Kid™** 2014, in addition to surveying Highlights™ readers on our website ([highlightskids.com](http://highlightskids.com)), we engaged C+R Research, a leading market research firm with expertise in youth and families, to ensure that our sampling would be representative of the broader U.S. population of children.

C+R analyzed the demographic data from the Highlights™ survey and then tapped into their kids' panel to provide us with a sample that would be balanced across genders and age groups. They also provided analysis of all data collected.

The survey was fielded in April and May of 2015. A total of 1,754 surveys were completed by boys and girls ages six to twelve, of which 49% were boys and 51% were girls. Thirty-nine percent of respondents were ages six to eight, 30% ages nine to ten, and 31% ages eleven to twelve.

# How do you know when your parents are mad at you?



36%

**USE NONVERBAL RESPONSES**

angry look on face,  
get mad or grumpy

65%

**USE VERBAL CUES**

yell at kids, tell kids they are  
mad, use kids' full names

13%

**PUNISH KIDS**

send kids to their rooms,  
take away something

One of our goals at Highlights is to support parents in raising children to be their best selves. We know that bringing up kids is not always smooth; that there are inevitable bumps in the road as kids grow and develop into their own unique beings. Kids act out from time to time, or simply need help in learning how to behave. They test limits in order to understand what is acceptable behavior and what is not. We recognize that family life comes with challenges and wanted to explore the issues associated with anger and discipline and how they affect children.

We asked kids how they know when their parents are mad at them—and it's very clear that parents make it apparent: 65% responded that their parents yell when they are angry, tell them outright that they are upset, or use their full name when talking to them. But many kids—36%—mentioned that their parents

display nonverbal cues that are easily recognizable—showing an angry look on their face or acting grumpy. And yes, some parents, as reported by 13% of kids surveyed, use time-honored punishments such as sending kids to their rooms or taking away privileges. There was no significant difference in responses based on age or gender.

### **TAKEAWAY**

“Yelling alone is not always damaging, although the surprise of a sudden change in volume can cause a child to be fearful or anxious. It's often what is said that is harmful. When parents raise their voices, the message typically isn't, ‘Wow, I love you, you're a great child.’ You're usually saying something negative, and ripping down their self-esteem.”

—*Deborah Sendek, program director, Center for Effective Discipline (CED)*

“Because they are talking angry  
and their eyebrows are down.”

—*Boy, age 7*

“They raise their voice and call  
me by my whole name.”

—*Girl, age 10*

“When they send me to my room.  
And take away privileges from me.”

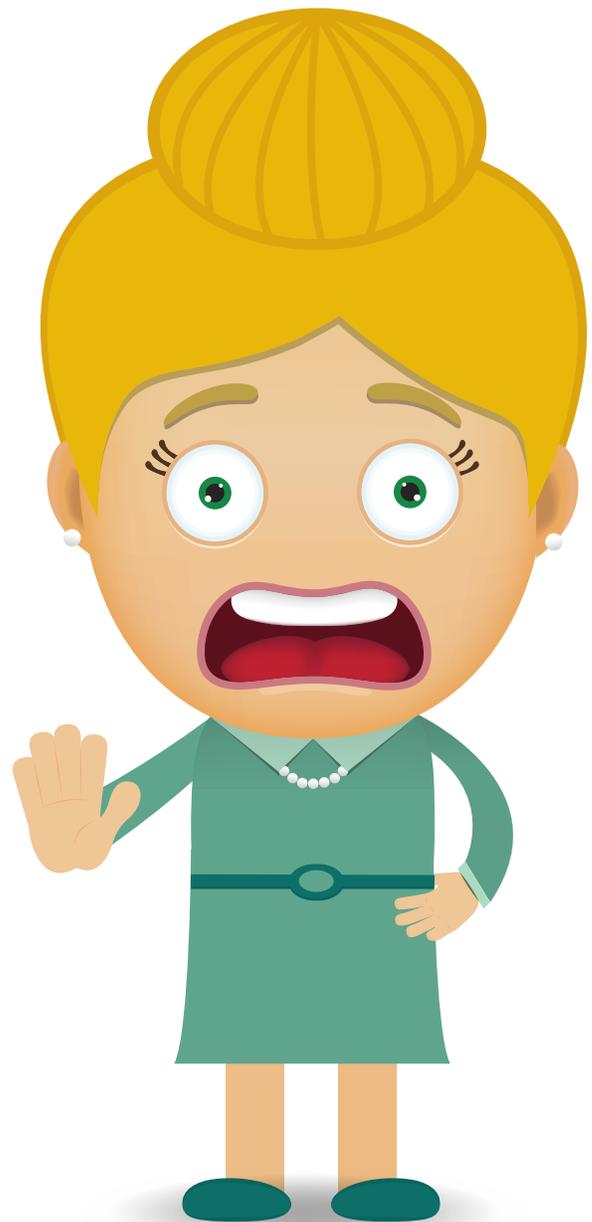
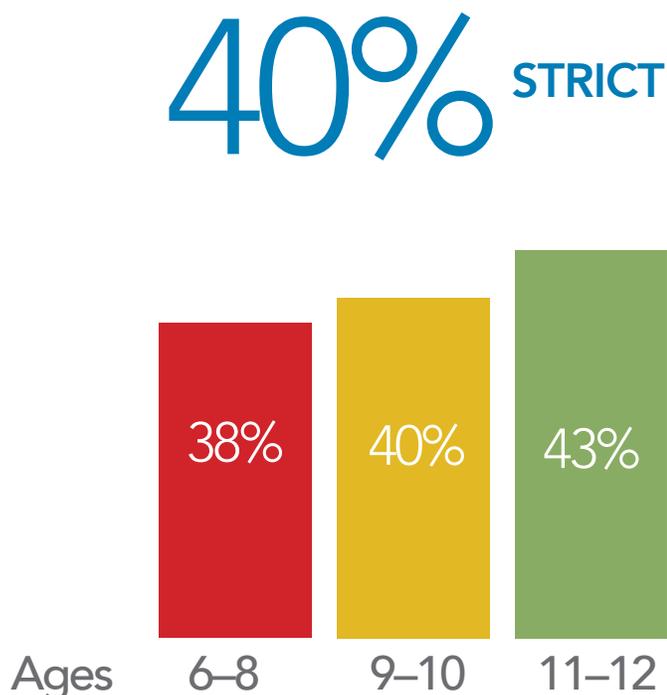
—*Boy, age 8*

# Are your parents strict or easygoing?

Many parents have a tough time disciplining their kids. On the one hand, because of everyone's busy schedules, families spend such little time together that few moms or dads want to be the parent-of-"no." Many, in fact, would prefer to be their child's friend and simply enjoy time together. On the other hand, there are so-called helicopter parents who want to control their child's every move.

We know that children need structure and consistency, along with a balance of freedom to grow and develop, in order to thrive and become their best selves. Discipline and setting limits need to come from parents. To take the pulse of discipline today, we thought we'd peek into the current climate of family life from the child's point of view, and asked kids if they think their parents are strict or easygoing.

Three-in-five kids describe their parents as easygoing, but as kids get older and become more independent, they are more likely to consider their parents as being strict (though 57% of kids ages 11 to 12 still label their parents as easygoing, down from 62% of 6- to 8-year-olds and 60% of 9- to 10-year-old respondents). That's understandable, as external forces and peer pressure increase as



children age, likely causing friction between parents and children. This is a natural course of events, since children will test boundaries on many levels as they develop and mature. When issues escalate, it's important for parents to keep lines of communication open and try to explain their thoughts and beliefs to their children. This way kids know their parents are not arbitrarily putting up walls but are instilling values and establishing codes of conduct. If parents simply engage in power struggles, no one wins.

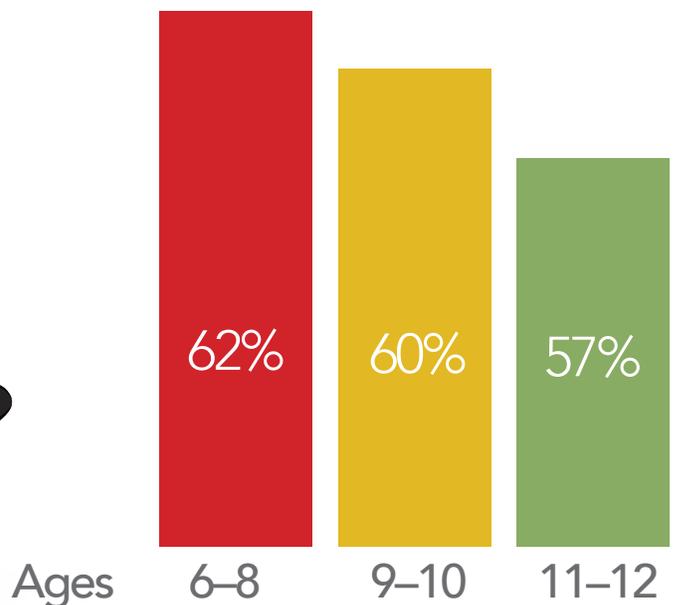
### TAKEAWAY

Time-out is the most popular discipline technique used by parents; however, it may not be the best action to take. "Studies in neuroplasticity—the brain's adaptability—have proved that repeated experiences actually change the physical structure of the brain. Since discipline-related interactions between children and caregivers comprise a large amount of childhood experiences, it becomes vital that parents thoughtfully consider how they respond when kids misbehave. Discipline is about teaching—not about punishment—and finding ways to teach children appropriate behavior is essential for healthy development."

—*"Time-Outs' Are Hurting Your Child,"* by Daniel J. Siegel, MD, and Tina Payne Bryson, PhD, *Time.com*



60% EASYGOING

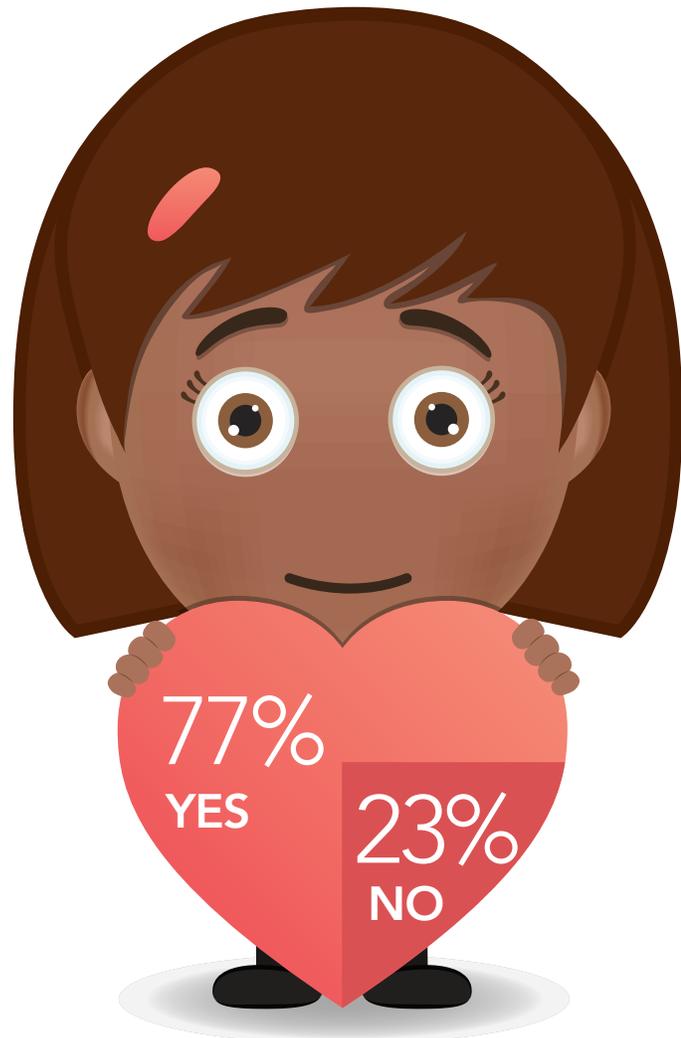
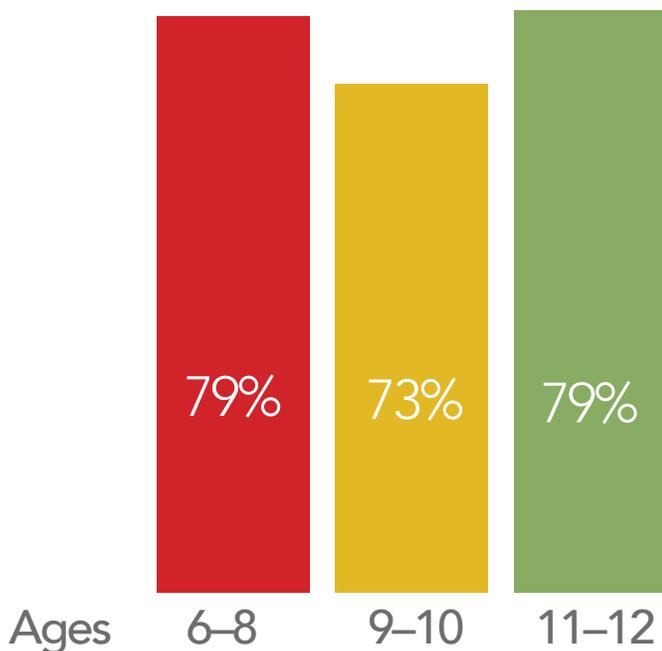


# Do you think discipline helps you behave better?

Continuing to explore the role of discipline from a child's point of view, we wanted kids' take on whether discipline is an effective behavioral tool. We asked if they think discipline helps them behave better. Most kids—77% of all who responded—agreed that discipline does improve their behavior because it helps them learn right from wrong, though this opinion takes a slight dip among 9 and 10 year olds in our survey, of whom only 73% think discipline is effective.

Some children claimed that discipline is ineffective, citing that it can exacerbate the situation due to ill feelings and resentment. This group hit upon two key factors in effective discipline—communication and follow-up. As voiced by one wise 12-year-old female respondent: "It depends. I don't think punishment makes kids behave better because then they just end up resenting whoever punished them. But I think teaching kids how to act and explaining to them what is right and what is wrong will help them behave better."

## YES



Highlights encourages parents to think beyond the action, meaning to use discipline as it was originally conceived—as a teaching method. Instead of practicing reactive discipline with an angry outburst or giving children a consequence for one particular misbehavior, whenever possible we hope parents will use each misstep as a teachable moment, to sit down with the child and communicate the whys behind the misbehavior, not simply assume the child knows what she did wrong. The child needs to understand what he did wrong and why it was wrong, but at the same time needs to feel unconditional love and acceptance from his parent. The old adage, “punish the action, not the child,” should stay front and center in a parent’s mind; otherwise a negative cycle could ensue. For discipline to be effective, all tension in the relationship between parent and child has to be relieved and the relationship restored.

### TAKEAWAY

“After any misbehavior, it’s a good idea to sit with your child and have a follow-up chat to clear the air and get all family members back on the same page. Here are items to discuss:

- ‘What did you do wrong?’
- ‘Why was that wrong?’

Finally, always end with an affirmation. A helpful statement is: ‘Okay, go ahead and try again.’”

—*The Secrets of Constructive Parenting by Dr. Scott Turansky, imom.com*

“I get mad and lose self-control and it starts all over again.”

—*Girl, age 10*

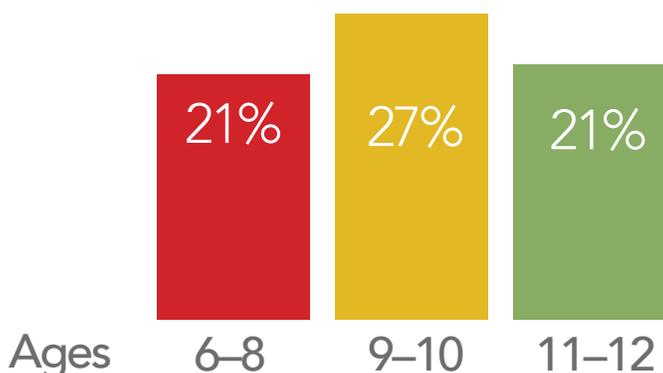
“You have to understand what you did wrong or else you will keep doing it.”

—*Girl, age 11*

“I don’t change my behavior after discipline.”

—*Boy, age 9*

# NO



## DISCIPLINE

# If you were a parent, how would you discipline your child?

**TIME OUT/GROUNDING (NET)**

27%

Time Out

12%

Higher among younger kids

Grounding

9%

Higher among older kids

Send to room

7%

Higher among younger kids & girls

**TAKING SOMETHING AWAY (NET)**

24%

Electronics

11%

Higher among older kids

Privileges

9%

Higher among older kids & boys

8%

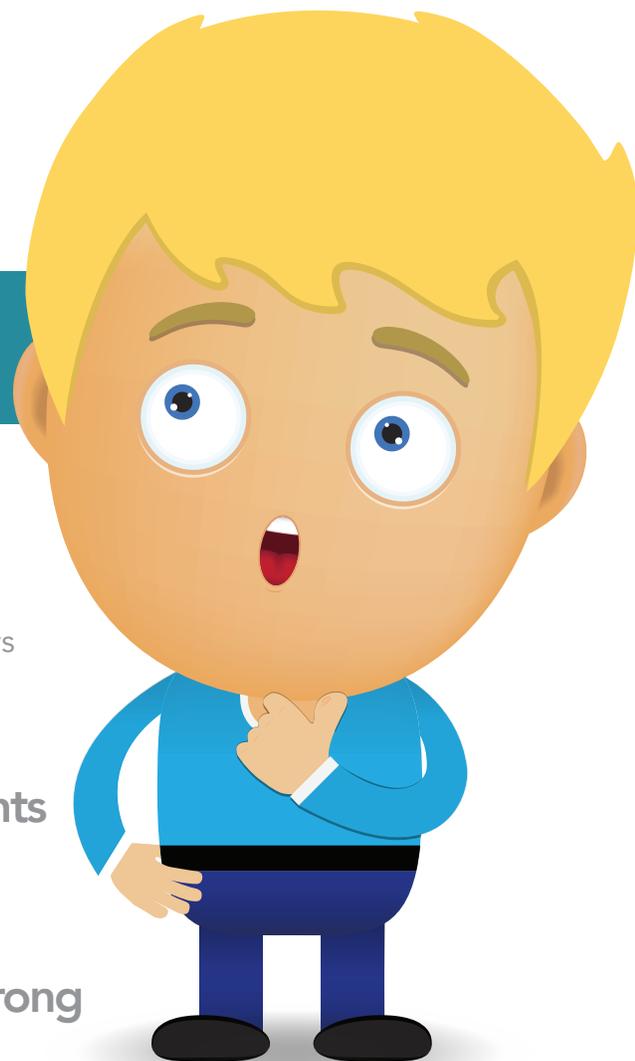
The same way my parents discipline me

Higher among older kids & boys

7%

Explain what they did wrong

Higher among older kids



We took a more lighthearted look into kids' feelings about discipline and asked them to project into the future and tell us, if they were a mom or a dad, how would they discipline their child? Our survey respondents were split on this issue. Twenty-seven percent said they would most likely impose a time out or grounding, followed by taking away an important item (mostly electronics) or a privilege at 24%.

We also found some variations by gender and age, which seem to reflect customary discipline practices: Time outs (12%) were more popular with younger kids, whereas grounding (9%) was higher among older kids. The option of sending children to their room when they misbehaved (7%) was favored by girls and younger kids. When we looked closer, we found that among those who favored the take-something-away option, older kids mentioned electronics (11%) most often, followed by taking away privileges (9%), which was the more popular answer with boys and older kids. Also higher among boys and older kids was the idea of disciplining their child the same way their mom and dad disciplined them (8%). Finally, the notion of explaining what they did wrong (7%) was higher among older kids.

### **TAKEAWAY**

"Next time the need for discipline arises, parents might consider a 'time-in': forging a loving connection, such as sitting with the child and talking or comforting. Some time to calm down can be extremely valuable for children, teaching them how to pause and reflect on their behavior. Especially for younger children, such reflection is created in relationship, not in isolation. And all of this will make parenting a whole lot more effective and rewarding in the long run."

— *Daniel J. Siegel, MD, and Tina Payne Bryson, PhD, authors of the new book No-Drama Discipline and the best-selling The Whole-Brain Child*

"I would take away their electronics for a time depending on how bad the thing they do is."

—*Boy, age 11*

"I would tell them with a calm and nice voice and if they didn't hear me then I would tell them until they heard. I would help them."

—*Girl, age 8*

"The same exact way my dad and grandmother do."

—*Girl, age 7*

# Do you get an allowance? Do you have to do chores to get that allowance?

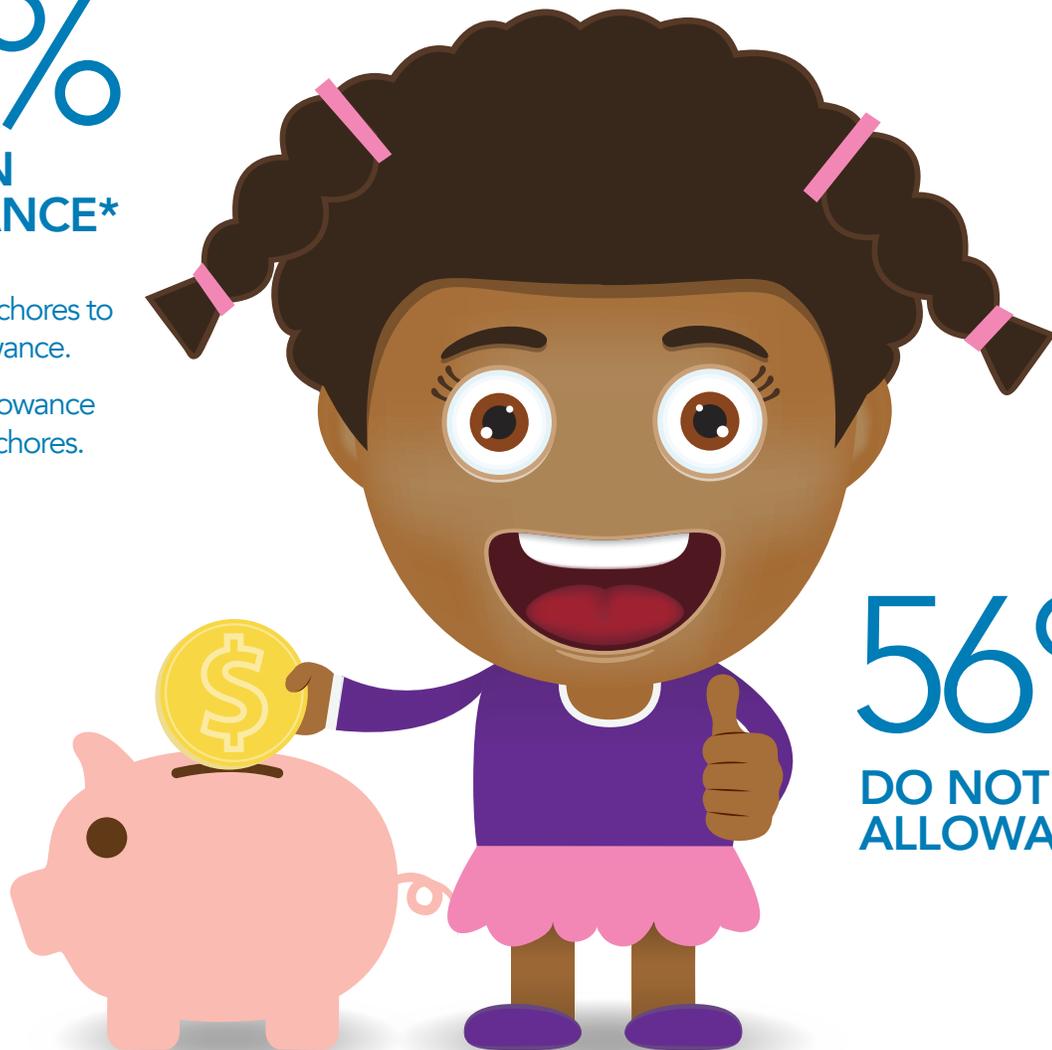
The subject of whether kids should get an allowance is a perennial parenting issue, with the pendulum swinging back and forth on it being in favor or not. Some experts suggest that children earn an allowance by completing household tasks.

But others feel that kids should view chores as a responsibility, not something they get paid to do. In some families, kids receive a regular allowance but can earn extra by taking on additional responsibilities beyond their basic chores.

**44%**  
**EARN AN  
ALLOWANCE\***

\*34% of kids do chores to receive an allowance.

10% earn an allowance without doing chores.



**56%**  
**DO NOT GET AN  
ALLOWANCE**

Given that the experts have different opinions, we wanted to explore this issue. Here's what our survey revealed: Less than half of 6- to 12-year-olds receive an allowance (44%), and most of those who do get one have to do chores to earn it (34%). Only 10% of our respondents earn an allowance without doing chores. If we look at results by gender, boys are less likely to earn an allowance, while girls are more likely to earn one without having to do chores.

However, parents who don't give an allowance may be doing a disservice to their kids in the long run. A new study of 1,000 parents and 881 children (T. Rowe Price's 2015 Parents, Kids & Money Survey) found that kids who get an allowance are more money-smart than those who do not. The study also revealed that having conversations with kids about money is critical to raising financially savvy kids. Letting kids gain experience with money—having it, spending it, and learning to save it—significantly benefits children, according to the study, and providing an allowance is one way to do that.

So if parents do give their kids an allowance, should there be restrictions on how they spend it? Experts at Healthykids.org suggest that it's good to let kids use it for fun things, not essential purchases such as food or clothing. This lets kids make buying decisions—and mistakes—without dire consequences.

Parents might want to encourage kids to put away a portion for charity and another portion for savings. If so, parents can let them choose where to donate the money. It may be a cause that a child can relate to in some way, like an animal shelter or a group that helps sick kids.

### **TAKEAWAY**

Experts recommend that parents should start teaching kids about money at an early age and that having a child earn an allowance is an important step to understanding money management. "For most children, an allowance is their first opportunity to experience making choices, budgeting, placing value on things, and figuring out the difference between needs and wants."

**—Carrie Schwab-Pomerantz, chief strategist of consumer education at Charles Schwab & Co. and president of the Charles Schwab Foundation**

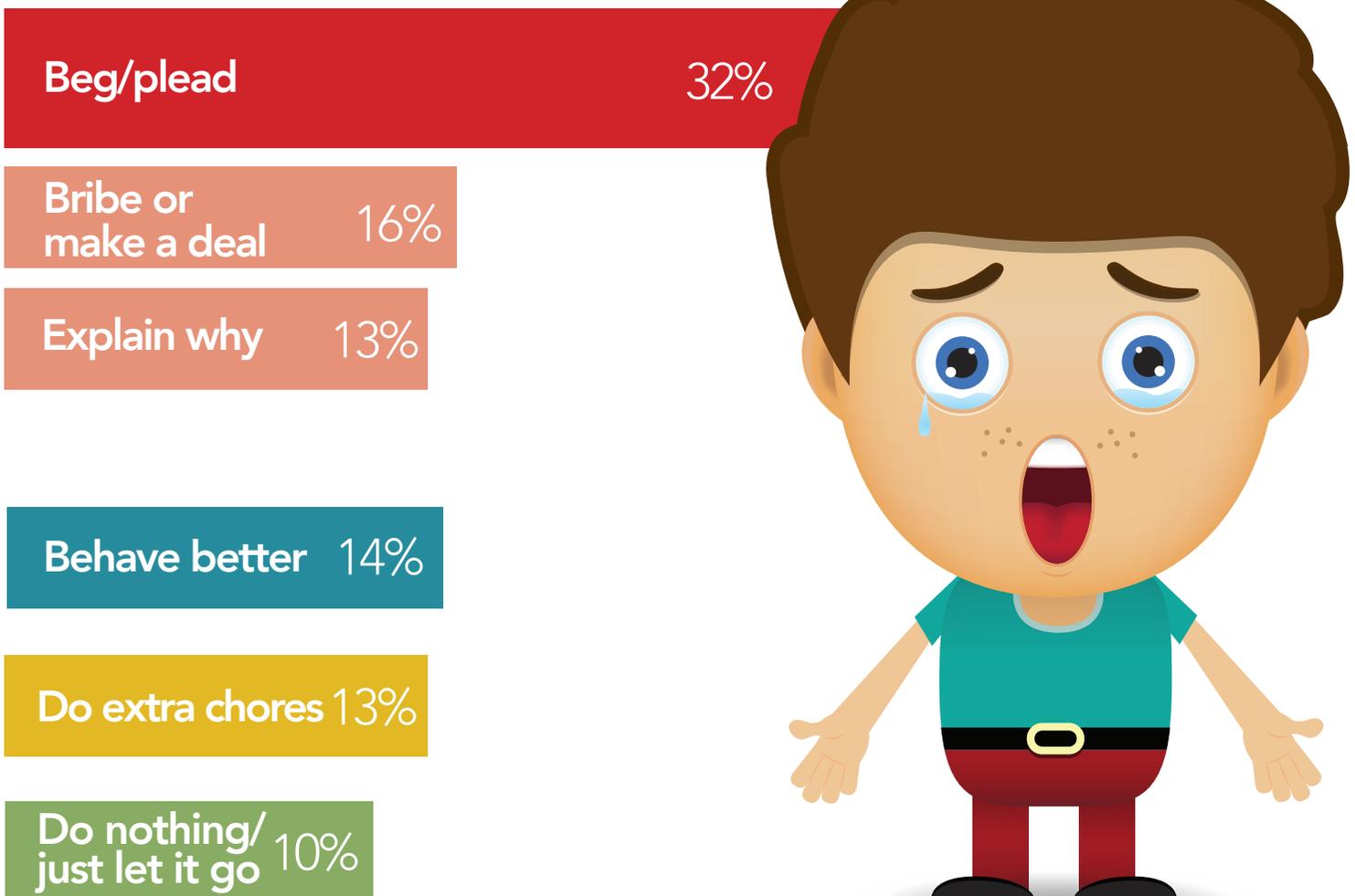
**"If it costs too much, they say that I can save up my allowance for half and they would pay half."**

**—Girl, age 10**

# When you want your parents to do something or buy something for you, how do you convince them?

If kids want something, they typically use a verbal communication tactic to try to convince their parents to get it for them. Younger kids will beg or plead to get what they want, but as kids get older, they become more likely to negotiate or bargain with

their parents. Many kids told us they beg (32%), bribe their parents or make a deal with them (16%), followed by trying to explain to their parents why they want the item (13%). Girls are most likely to beg



or plead (“I tell them I would listen to them every second after that,” as one girl respondent put it) or make a deal with their parents (cleaning the house for a period of time was a popular response), while boys are more likely to improve their behavior (one 12-year-old boy said he promises his parents he will be nice to his sister), which 14% of respondents cited, followed by doing extra chores at 13%, and doing nothing or just letting it go at 10%.

### When you ask your parents to buy you things, how do they usually respond?

Many kids hear their parents say they have to earn the things they want. But there was no majority

agreement in answer to this question, as parents display different behaviors when their kids ask them to buy something. Our survey shows that 44% of respondents’ parents tell kids that they have to earn what they want. Boys are often told this more than girls. Girls, on the other hand, are more often told “maybe” or that “it costs too much” more often than boys. Seventeen percent of kids told us that their parents simply say “no” when asked, and 16% of parents say “maybe.” Eleven percent of respondents said that their parents buy the item for them right away, and another 11% indicated that it depends on the situation. Telling the child that the item cost too much was cited by 6% of survey respondents.

## When you ask your parents to buy you things, how do they usually respond?



16%  
PARENTS SAY MAYBE

11%  
DEPENDS ON  
THE SITUATION

44%  
PARENTS TELL ME  
I HAVE TO EARN IT

17%  
PARENTS SAY NO

6%  
PARENTS TELL ME IT  
COSTS TOO MUCH

11%  
PARENTS BUY IT  
FOR ME RIGHT AWAY

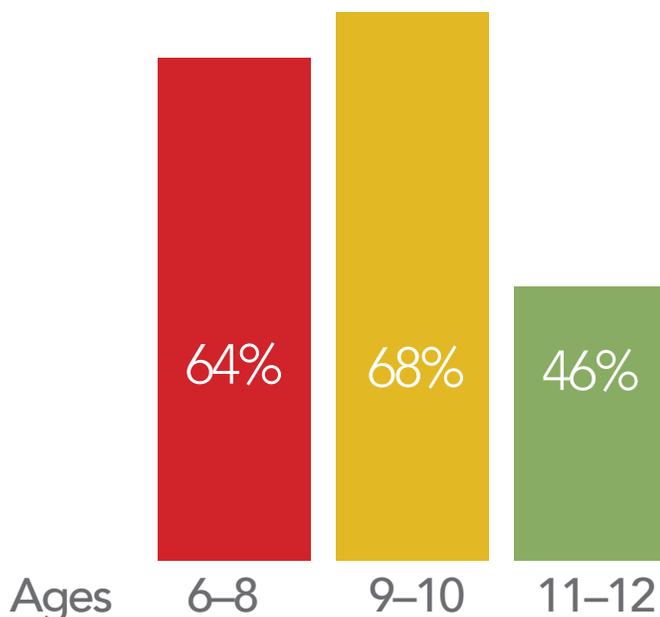
# When you are playing sports, do you think everyone should get a trophy or just the winners?

Three in five kids think everyone deserves a trophy, but among older kids, the scale tips toward only winners getting recognition (11- to 12-year-olds come in at 54% for only the winners). Girls tend to favor recognizing everyone (at 66%) whereas boys are more evenly split (53% everyone and 47% just the winners).

Although opinions vary about who deserves recognition, the reasons behind those feelings are similar—kids in both camps cite hard work and fairness as justification for both sides of the argument.

Those in favor of only the winners told us it was important to learn to lose, as one boy, age 11, stated: "Kids have to learn that they can't always win and they have to learn how to be polite when they lose."

60% EVERYONE



Also from the winners-only camp, a girl, age 8, responded: "If everyone gets [a trophy] then some people may not try their hardest because they know they will get a prize either way."

Many who felt that everyone deserves a trophy focused on being rewarded for their hard work. As one boy, age 8, said, everyone should receive a trophy "Cause everyone participated and they tried their hardest." Another everyone-advocate, a 7-year-old girl, cited the team aspect of sports: "We're

a team and everybody does their best. Just cause one team wins doesn't make them better than other teams. Everybody has feelings."

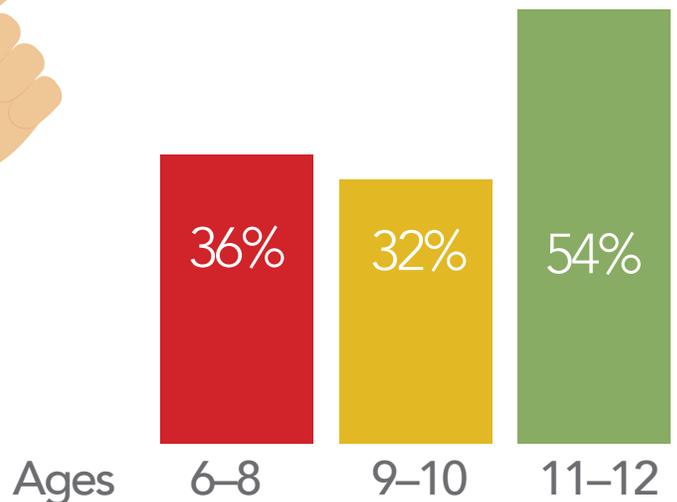
### TAKEAWAY

While giving everyone a trophy may seem like a warm and fuzzy idea, it may be depriving our children the critical skill of learning how to deal with losing. According to a study by The Ohio State University (February 2015), "parental overvaluation was the largest predictor of a child's narcissism over time, but interestingly, it did *not* predict self-esteem. In other words, telling kids how exceptional they are doesn't produce kids with healthy self-esteem—it just makes them more narcissistic."

—Alice G. Walton, "Too Much Praise Can Turn Kids into Narcissists, Study Suggests," *Forbes.com*



40% JUST THE WINNERS



# More to Explore Online



"My parents are never mad at me."

—*Girl, age 8*

"I wouldn't discipline. I'd be calm.  
I want to be the nice one."

—*Boy, age 6*

"I am going to be an engineer, not  
a mom or dad."

—*Boy, age 6*

To learn more about Highlights State of the Kid™ 2015 results, to watch our videos of kids' responses, or to read past reports, please visit [www.highlights.com/state-of-the-kid](http://www.highlights.com/state-of-the-kid).

# About Us

## HIGHLIGHTS™

**D**evoted to **Fun with a Purpose™**, global family media brand Highlights for Children, Inc. (Highlights.com), has helped children become their best selves for generations. In addition to *Highlights*, the company's flagship magazine, Highlights for Children's other offerings include *High Five*, a magazine for preschoolers; *High Five Bilingüe*, an English-Spanish version of *High Five* for preschoolers; and *Hello*, a magazine for babies and toddlers, as well as a children's book division, puzzle book clubs, and a variety of digital products.

## C+R RESEARCH

C+R Research is a full-service marketing-insights agency that brings more than 30 years of experience in the youth segment, with two syndicated lifestyle reports (Youth Beat & YouthBeat Jr) and a COPPA-compliant online panel of 25,000+ U.S. kids under the age of 13. C+R specializes in delivering custom quantitative and qualitative research to help youth-targeted companies better understand the needs and motivations of kid and parents.

**Special thanks to the kids who sat down to write to Highlights about their lives.**

