



Search the Site:

[Home](#)[About Us](#)[Contact Us](#)[Free Newsletter](#)[news](#) | [expert Q & A](#) | [resources](#) | [community](#) | [diaries](#) | [shop](#)English **Español** Canada

Family Life Cycle

[Preconception.com](#)↳ [Cycle Daily Calendar](#)[Pregnancy Today](#)↳ [Pregnancy Daily Calendar](#)↳ [BirthPlan.com](#)↳ [BirthStories.com](#)[Babies Today](#)↳ [Baby Daily Calendar](#)[Breastfeed.com](#)[Toddlers Today](#)[Preschoolers Today](#)[Children Today](#)[Preteenagers Today](#)[Teenagers Today](#)

Life Style

[Dads Today](#)[Moms Today](#)[Grandparents Today](#)[Recipes Today](#)[Home Style Today](#)[Traveling Today](#)[Twins Today](#)[Special Kids Today](#)[iParenting Adoption](#)[iParentingStories.com](#)[iParenting University](#)[Personal Pages](#)

Boy Basics 101

A Survival Guide for Parenting Male Tweens

By Kendeyl Johansen

Messy rooms, arguments and peer pressure: Parenting a tween boy might seem like it causes prematurely graying hair. Believe it or not, with our tips and plenty of good humor, it's possible to enjoy life with a male tween.

Support Independence Days

Preteen boys are reaching for independence, and this causes frustration if parents aren't prepared for the behavior. "Control can feel like it's slipping away unless parents expect that and follow along with the children as they seek independence," says Bonnie Harris, M.S. Ed., author of [When Your Kids Push Your Buttons: And What You Can Do About It](#) (Warner Books, April 2003). "If you expect a preteen to always listen and do exactly what you say, buttons are going to get pushed."

To avoid conflict and verbal fireworks, Harris advises taking responsibility for your own buttons. "Rather than blaming children for pushing your buttons, become aware of your buttons (fears, judgments, criticisms) and diffuse them by understanding why they upset you and why your child is behaving a certain way," she says.

Kara Wales of Park City, Utah, mom to 10-year-old Garrett, wanted to order him to change when he dressed for school in a loose-fitting tank top and baggy shorts. "I disliked the sloppy way he looked, but I took a breath and made myself slow down," she says. "It's not what we wore to school, but it's what his friends wear now, and they're all good kids. I let him get away with it."

Wales had the courage to face her fear that people would think she was a bad mom for letting her son dress so casually. And she deactivated her button by realizing styles had changed and her son wasn't trying to make her crazy – he just wanted to fit in.



Publications

Pregnancy Magazine

Baby Years Magazine

Women's Health &
Fitness Magazine

European Homes &
Gardens Magazine

International

iParenting Español

iParenting Canada



Let's Talk

Harris says the best way to diffuse tween issues is by discussing them with your child. "Instead of disdaining your son's music and interests, get into them with your child and try and understand what he likes about them," she says.

Johnathan Barcon of Irvine, Calif., thought his 12-year-old son, Zander, wasted too much time surfing. But when Barcon rented a surfboard and hit the waves with his son, he marveled at the beauty of the ocean and felt invigorated. Barcon has since bought a surfboard, and Zander jokes his dad likes surfing more than he does.

In addition to discussing your tween's interests, Harris recommends talking about your values and opinions – without forcing them on your tween – and always listening to his thoughts. "When your preteen has the freedom to have his own opinions, because you've given it to him, he will be much more open to telling you what he really thinks," she says.

Shannon Tilley of Gilbert, Ariz., mom to six children (including 9-year-old Jayce and 12-year-old Braden), is trying to help her boys understand and empathize with differences in others. She cringes when her sons sometimes quietly make fun of people who are different, but she says, "I think the best time for advice is another time – not when your kids are talking to you, or they will stop talking and you may never know the real situation."

Tilley later finds opportunities to build empathy and understanding; for instance, if her kids are staring at a man with bad hygiene, she points out that he might smell bad because he's too sick to take care of himself or he's poor and doesn't have anywhere to live.

More Than Words

We've all had preteenagers tune out our words, which is why it's especially important to teach by example. "If your son sees that you have self-respect, respect for a partner and high standards, he'll model his behavior on this," says Mike Domitrz, author of [May I Kiss You?](#) (Awareness Publications, March 2003) and creator of [Can I Kiss You?](#), an interactive program for schools and campuses. "If you treat your tween with great respect and value and your child understands the 'why' behind not getting involved with certain behavior, he will have a real reason for saying 'no' to peer pressure – instead of simply saying 'because my parents say so.'"

Tweens are starting to think about intimacy and dating, and it's essential to stress respect for the opposite sex. "Sons need to learn that the only way you can be sure what a girl wants is to 'ask' her," says Domitrz.

Tame the Teasing

Tween boys love to tease other family members. A little teasing is fine, but things can get ugly if they escalate. Tilley found a unique way to tame the teasing in her family. "I heard someplace that you should force your kids to play together as a consequence for not getting along, but I don't agree, because I think it teaches that playing together is a punishment and not a privilege" she says.

She couldn't think of a "natural consequence" for teasing until she decided on "toilet duty" – a natural consequence since "teasing" and "toilet" both start with T. "This has worked great for us," she says. "Toilet duty isn't nearly as fun for my kids as getting along."



Celebrate Your Tween

Preteen problems usually don't last forever, so find the positive things about boys of this age and savor them. "My 10-year-old, Brandon, is old enough now that we can share fun, more intense activities, like going to a college or pro basketball game, but we also love having long chats about life just before he falls asleep," says Janie Sutton of Las Vegas, Nev. "Brandon will probably be off to college at 18, so my time with him is more than halfway over already. We try and enjoy our time together whenever we can!"

Want to see more?

- [Mama's Boy? The Key to Understanding Your Sensitive Male Child](#)
- [Raising Boys Today](#)
- [Tackling the Tough Stuff: How to Talk to Your Teenage Son](#)
- [Talk about it!](#)

.....

About the Author: Kendeyl Johansen is a contributing editor for [iParenting Media](#) and the mother of three.

.....

[Back to the index](#)

<http://preteenagerstoday.com> © 1999-2003 iParenting, LLC. All Rights Reserved.
Please read the important [disclaimer](#) regarding material presented on this site and our [Privacy Policy Statement](#).

Comments or questions? [We'd love to hear from you](#). Like what you see? [Tell a friend!](#)