

# TRAINING YOUR KIDS TO VALUE THEIR 'STUFF'

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Have you ever been unable to walk into a store or into your house without almost tripping over bicycles or toys in the way? What about trying to get down a driveway where scooters, bats, balls, helmets, and gloves have been left strewn all over the place. Isn't it aggravating? I wonder how all that stuff gets there? Perhaps Gremlins have been playing in the night hours while our kids are asleep and get whisked away on the moon shuttle at the crack of dawn before they can put things away again!

My friend Ron told me that he warned his young son several times not to leave his new bicycle where someone could trip over it. The warnings went unheeded until one day Ron got a hacksaw out and chopped the new bicycle in half. Now, while I thought such an action was extreme, and would have given the bicycle away to some grateful child, Ron's son did get the message in the end - too late.

So why do kids leave their stuff everywhere? There are many reasons and here are a few. Kids do not value gifts when given in great quantities. Neither do they develop a sense of gratitude. I remember visiting a friend just before Christmas and being appalled when I saw just how many gifts were under the tree, covering a wide area of the living room floor.

When kids do not appreciate the value of gifts because there are just so many of them, they can become careless in their use of them. Kids are far happier with a few cool things that they get to play with a lot, rather than so many they just can't possibly appreciate them.

Many times parents give kids 'stuff' to replace time they don't feel they can give. A survey was done just after 9/11 and the results showed that when asked what kids most wanted from their parents, the unanimous answer was TIME and LOVE.

Kids can be careless with their stuff when they are not taught how to care for it. When given gifts such as pets, sports gear, or toys, it is a golden opportunity for parents to teach some important concepts – gratitude, commitment, a sense of responsibility, trust, the need to nurture (in the case of pets), the safety of others, correct care or maintenance of the gift, and the willingness to share. Kids also need to be told the consequences of not following the rules of looking after their gifts, toys or pets. Confiscation of a bicycle or sports gear does make a child think more about the privilege of having been given the gift, and it teaches the importance of obedience.

There is nothing wrong with giving kids gifts. The problem lies with either giving too much stuff, or in not teaching our kids the responsibility that

goes with the ownership. Next time you have to step over bicycles and toys that have not been put away safely, ask yourself – why do my kids leave their stuff everywhere? The blame is not always with the kids. They only develop careless attitudes because they have been allowed to. It is never too late to train our children to be thankful and responsible. And lastly - no amount of stuff will replace the personal love and nurturing of a parent.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.