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## EC5527 The Child as a Homemaker

Florence J. Ovens

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK  
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

1935

U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating  
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

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THE CHILD AS A HOMEMAKER

Florence J. Ovens, B.S., A.M.

Editor, National Kindergarten Association, New York City

Ordinarily we think of parents rather than children as homemakers. However, the new "Webster" defines homemaker as "one who makes a home as distinguished from one who keeps a house," and one definition given for home is "the abiding place of the affections." Surely children, then, have much to do with homemaking, and because they really have so much to do with it, this topic is worthy of serious consideration.

The end and aim of education used to be the child's future, but we are realizing more and more that the present should be our chief concern. If the child is habitually having those experiences which are the most beneficial to him at the moment, the future will take care of itself. It is because so much of a lifetime is spent in looking forward and later in looking back that many of the opportunities of the present are lost.

The members of a family have years to spend together. Each one has a distinct and separate part in the homemaking. Together they make their present condition of living, and it is successful and enjoyable only in so far as there is cooperation.

There is no reference to "homemakers" in the articles that follow, but the reader may find it interesting to visualize the homes represented in each case and seek out the homemaking features involved. Others will come to mind through association. Then the reader may like to consider his own home and make whatever comparisons are helpful. This will start a worth while investigation. Parents should not blame children for being poor homemakers, should they? Homemaking is an art that mothers and fathers must first study and then teach.

Of course the negative qualities indicated in the following pages--heedlessness, untidiness, destructiveness, unwillingness, selfishness, jealousy, discourtesy--need to be reversed. The articles suggest a method of attack in each case, but this may not be the wisest method for use in a certain reader's home. Indeed, the special problem needing attention there may not be here mentioned. In any case, much further study is recommended; this is only an introductory lesson.

Homemaking is an attitude of mind, and it should be so developed that the grown child will hear "Home, Sweet Home" with more of joy than sorrow and never with bitterness. Both of the latter are much too common today. The men and women who learn in childhood to be good homemakers will take home with them wherever they go. And while poverty and distress may associate themselves in memory with a certain house on a certain street, the word home will indicate continuity, and be precious, equally for the cherished recollections of the past and for the happy associations of the present.

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COOPERATION  
By Cora M. Silvius

I was nursing in Mrs. Wetherbee's home. She is a nervous, hard-working woman and a great talker. She has a boy and a girl. One day a few minutes after she had mopped the kitchen floor, the little ones raced through the room leaving muddy marks behind them. I saw it and waited for the storm to break. It did. The culprits stood before her, but bodies only, for their minds were on the out-of-doors play to which they were eager to return. When she had delivered her tirade they rushed off, not reappearing until called in at supper time.

"I don't know what to do about them," she confided to me. "I slave for them all day long, but what do they care?"

I tried to point out wherein she failed, but her eyes were blank. She refused to see that she was at fault.

A short time later I was called to the Simeon home. There were two small children here, also, and, as it happened, I went to the kitchen one day just after Mrs. Simeon had mopped her floor. She was laying clean newspapers about from one door to the other. I watched. The children came to the door, saw the papers, and paused.

"Oh, Mom's mopped," cried the boy. "Think we better go in?"

"Let's wash our feet at the hose and let the sun dry them," answered the little girl. "Then we won't track in any mud."

They had a merry time washing bare feet. On the clean steps of the porch they sat quietly while the sun did his work. Then they skipped in.

"Mother, we washed our feet. See how nice and clean they are? We didn't get a bit of mud on your clean floor. Now, may we have some cookies?"

"Yes, I made some especially for your ten o'clock lunch. And there's a bottle of lemonade in the icebox. Please take it out to the porch."

"Aw, Mom, that's great. Come, Mira," said the boy.

I watched as they enjoyed their feast on the porch. They were careful of crumbs. How different they were from the other two children!

"How did you teach them to be careful?" I asked the mother.

"Oh," she laughed, "I began when they were tiny. I taught them to help me keep our house clean. I said, 'Dirt has its place.' They know they can play all they want to out-of-doors in the dirt, at the proper time, and they also know that dirt does not belong on their good clothes or in the house. They are wonderful about it, I think."

I had to admit they were wonderful. But then, she had taught them instead of scolding them. A good habit is easier to learn than a bad habit to break. It was something to think about. One woman was wearing herself out nagging her children with only unhappy results, while the other was enjoying her children and letting them enjoy themselves.



## TEACHING TIDINESS

By Grace Archbold

"Why, what is the matter, Ada? You look troubled."

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Maydew, as she closed her friend's living room door and dropped wearily into a chair. "Here are you with four children and your house as neat as a new pin. You look bright and rested at two o'clock in the afternoon. I have only three children, yet my place looks as though a cyclone had been through it. I felt so discouraged I just had to run in and see you for a bit."

"You do look tired! What are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know. I'm always telling the children to put away their things, but it does not seem to do the least good. It took me half an hour to clear up after breakfast. There's always a hunt going on for lost caps or lost books and pencils. When I should have been preparing dinner, I was washing dishes. I had to leave the beds. It was just the same after dinner. Seems to me I'm never done. As to mending, I dare not look at the stocking basket. I often have to cobble up a hole at the last minute."

"What time do you have breakfast?"

"Somewhere around half past seven. This morning, I had to do some telephoning I forgot last night, and that made it late. It was a scramble getting them off to school. It threw out my whole morning. If only John and the children were more tidy, I could have caught up all right."

"I find if I serve the meals at regular times it makes things easier. I just insist that everyone be at the table on time unless there is some very good reason for tardiness. Then everything else falls into place."

"What do you do if they stray in late to the table?"

"Well, you see, Dad is very particular about being punctual. If he has to be late, he always says, 'Sorry, Mother,' and explains. He has taught the children to do the same. They like to copy him and have learned that it is 'bad manners' to Mother not to be there if possible. At the end of a meal, each child carries out his own dishes and scrapes them into the chicken's tin or the dog's plate which I stand on a sheet of paper. Bella, my eldest, takes the crumbs off the table and sees that it is left neat. Even the little ones can help by carrying something out. It teaches them to be thoughtful, too. You would be surprised what a difference it makes. If there is a rush and scramble, the naturally tidy ones soon learn to be untidy. At first I often used to be tempted to neglect preparing the meals in good time, but it does not pay. It's bad for the children's habits, not to mention their health."

"But, what about their toys and books? And when my children get up in the morning, they throw their night clothes on the floor and leave me to pick them up."

"I had a row of hooks put up in the closet within easy reach and assigned certain hooks to each child. Once a month I make a special cake for the one who

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has the best record for tidiness. This is always an important event. They all have the cake for supper, but the fortunate one cuts it up as he wishes. If books or playthings are left about, I put them in a big box until the end of the week, when they are allowed to claim them. I have very little trouble now. They have acquired the tidy habit."

#### THE TODDLER IN THE FLOWER GARDEN

By Viola E. Holley

It was summer-time and the flowers that I had planted in my garden were in bloom. Then I learned what a problem it was to keep the eighteen-month-old toddler from picking the blossoms. He had just grown big enough to run about alone in the garden, and he was no longer content to stay where I put him.

And what a beautiful new world he had found! New buds were opening every day. Butterflies were flitting all about. The grass was soft and cool. It was truly a delightful place for him to spend the morning hours if only I could find some way to teach him not to pick the blossoms.

But what a problem it was! Their gay colors delighted him. Then, too, he had seen me pick them, and thought it was the thing to do. I did not feel that I should punish him, for I wanted him to learn to enjoy the flowers, even though he was so small. Finally I thought of a plan.

Each day, when out-of-doors, I took the opportunity to walk with him among the flowers. I did not pick any of them at this time. Instead, I stooped and patted the blossoms gently and caressingly and said, "Pretty, pretty." At once his little hand flew out to one of them and he patted it and tried to say, "Pretty, pretty," while he smiled up at me.

In this way we explored all parts of the garden. We admired the great tall sunflowers which I had to lift him high to see and pat. We visited the four o'clocks in the evening when their flowers were open, and in the morning when we found them asleep. We admired the borders of dainty forget-me-nots and the gorgeous beds of poppies. The little pansies especially delighted him, and he ran to see them again and again.

We made our little journey through this land of flowers as often as possible. It always proved to be a happy trip, and often there were many surprises. Now and then a humming-bird or a sphinx moth joined us, and always took care, as we did, not to harm the blossoms.

When new flowers began to bloom, especially when my choicest blossoms sent forth their buds, I was even more careful to be with him when he first saw them.

In a short time the garden offered little temptation for flower picking. He ran about alone among the blossoms, patting, now here, now there, enjoying their softness and the brightness of their colors. When he had thus satisfied himself, he went elsewhere to play.

There were days, of course, now and then, when he did pick a blossom. Whenever this happened, I stopped my other work and went with him, showing him again how we could pat the flowers instead of picking them, but this was seldom necessary and many happy hours were spent in the garden.



# LITTLE HOME HELPERS

By Helen Searles Marsh

"Oh, I am glad it is Saturday!" Meta exclaimed. "Mother and I cook today."

"Cook? What do you know about cooking?" one of her older schoolmates asked.

"I like Saturday for play," another little girl said, with her arms around a playmate.

"My mother doesn't make me work at all," boasted a girl of eleven.

Although Mrs. Merrill kept a maid, she was teaching her young daughter, Meta, to enjoy household tasks. At the age of nine Meta was a happy helper in the home. She liked the idea of doing things with Mother. She was becoming self-reliant and was recognized even by outsiders as an important factor in the welfare and harmony of the home. Her wise mother had begun at an early age to teach the value of helpfulness. She had made the little daily tasks real play and Meta was always proud to assist Mother.

Doing certain duties at a specified time had become a fixed habit with the child. She had learned to do things well because she enjoyed doing them. Her bed was opened in the morning. Her clothes hung properly on hangers in her closet. The bureau drawers were kept in order. She appeared on time at the breakfast table, neatly dressed. She helped with the dishes before school.

Saturday morning was to Meta the nicest time in the week. She took many steps to help get all in readiness for the pleasant task of making good things for Daddy to eat.

"What shall we cook today, Meta?" the mother asked.

"Let us make rhubarb pie. I want to learn to make one." Happily, the child began to prepare the rhubarb.

Together mother and daughter worked and played. There was thought for pleasures as well as duties.

"How do you manage to get your little girl interested in the housework?" a distressed mother asked Mrs. Merrill. "My child never seems willing to help me. I pick up her clothes and constantly do for her what your child does for herself. I scold and scold but I cannot get her to help me willingly."

"Make your daughter feel that it is fun to work with you. Do not scold, but show her the easiest and best way that you both can do a piece of work together. Make a pleasure of it whatever it is. A bit of praise and appreciation on your part will encourage her to try again when she makes a mistake or forgets. Let her know how happy it makes you to have her in the kitchen with you part of the time. Work and play together. If you made a mistake by not beginning earlier to gain your daughter's confidence, begin now," Mrs. Merrill advised.

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"Let your daughter come over next Saturday and see Meta and me at our fun of cooking," she continued. "She may want to help prepare the luncheon which she will share with us. Some other Saturday I shall invite the two girls to get up a nice lunch by themselves for our family--you to be our guest."

Mrs. Merrill's scheme worked well. Soon the neighbor's daughter was cooking in her own home, and when her mother spoke of her one day as "my partner," she showed very plainly that it pleased her.

#### PHILIP CALLS THE ROLL

By Minerva Hunter

Philip, the youngest of five children, had not only his parents to adore and serve him, but brothers and sisters as well. Philip's ringlets held the sunlight; Philip's cheeks wore a rosy tint; Philip's eyes shone and Philip's piping voice brought homage. What was more, Philip was beginning to realize his kingship. In his precious baby way he ruled the other children with a firm, unyielding hand. Whatever he wanted, he got. No matter who was using a toy, Philip usually merely mentioned his desire for it, and it was his. Should the rightful owner hesitate, at least one of the other children remembered personal grievances against the offender and used little Philip as an opportunity to even matters. Expressions of disapproval became so vehement that the delinquent repented speedily and Philip profited. It was amusing, but led to no good end, so one day while Philip had his nap, the mother talked with the four older children.

"We love, Philip, don't we?" she began.

Warm agreement in varied forms met this question.

"Who loves Carl Craig?" was the next question.

"Nobody could!" came the quick answer.

"Why?"

"He always wants his way," Henry said.

"He's selfish with his toys," David answered.

"He wants our toys, too," Mary added.

"Oh, Mother, why Mother," Katie almost whispered in her surprise, "surely you do not think our Philip is at all like Carl Craig?"

The comparison startled the other children. Still, when they thought about it, the two had several traits in common.

"But, Mother, Philip is just a baby," Mary defended.

"And so sweet," David added.

"We do not mind giving up to him," Henry assured her.



"But Philip is growing older," Katie meditated aloud. "He must not grow up like Carl Craig!"

"Everyone must be fond of our Philip," Mary declared warmly.

Henry and David agreed.

"It is better for those who love him to correct him, than for those who do not care for him to try to get even with him," their mother reasoned. Then she and the four children laid a plan to help Philip overcome his unsocial habits.

When Philip waked up he was in good humor. For more than an hour he played in a most friendly manner. Then he took a sudden notion that Henry's toy elephant was exactly what he wanted, though Henry was playing with it himself at the time.

"Dive it to me," Philip demanded in his queer little voice that everyone loved.

Henry played on, though it was evident to the other children that he had lost his desire to play with the elephant.

"Henwy, Henwy, Henwy!" Philip wailed.

Henry weakened; only the thought of Carl Craig and the family's plan for Philip held him firmly to his course.

Seeing that Henry refused to give him the elephant, Philip turned to his older sister and chief ally. "Katie, Katie, Katie!" he implored and added an energetic, "Wow, wow!"

Katie read her book, seeming not to hear.

"Mawy, Mawy, Mawy! Wow, wow!" Philip yelled, turning to his other sister.

Mary went on dressing her doll without looking up.

"David, David, David!" Philip screeched in despair.

David walked to the window and looked out.

Philip had called the roll. No one was present to take his part. He felt he must do something to win approval. Picking up his fire engine which he knew Henry liked, he offered it to him. When Henry accepted it and thanked him, Philip did not ask for the elephant nor touch it.

Suddenly there was a sound of glad voices. What a relief to have the first lesson over and Philip not hurt. Really he seemed helped. Bless him!

"Let's play tag," Katie suggested. This was Philip's favorite game.

"You be IT," four happy voices said to Philip.



WHY ANN TEASED SALLY

By Janette Stevenson Murray

Ann finished pasting the last picture in her geography notebook, then, leaning over, slyly pinched Sally who was practicing. There was a shriek and a scuffle.

"Ann, you're always annoying Sally," scolded Mother.

Soon there was more trouble; Sally's music had disappeared. Mother, exasperated, shook Ann and sent her upstairs.

"You never punish Sally; she's your pet," said Ann, making a face at Sally as she passed.

"It's just a constant fuss," Mother complained after the girls were in bed. "I've ignored it, thinking they would outgrow it, but I believe they're getting worse. They are so nearly the same age they ought to enjoy each other."

"Well, who's to blame?" inquired Father.

"Why, Ann, of course; she's always teasing Sally."

"She must have some reason. If we could get at the cause of the teasing, we might stop it."

"Cause of the teasing! I have thought of that. I wonder if there really is a definite cause." Mother, meditating on this, slowly rolled up the darned stockings. "Last winter, the teacher suggested that we give Ann more attention so she wouldn't think we were partial to Sally. I said, 'Ann isn't jealous,' but I could see the teacher was not convinced."

Mother went on darning, turning the matter over in her mind. A little while later she looked up. "Alfred," she said, "I'm afraid I'm to blame. The teacher is right; Ann is jealous. Do you remember how Ann loved to carry her pink baby blanket about and would never go to sleep without it? Well, one day, I wrapped Sally in this blanket. I remember I didn't ask Ann to lend it to Sally, I just took it. Ann cried very hard and scorned the larger blue blanket I gave her. After that, I never could leave her alone with Sally, although up to that time she had delighted in her baby sister. Once, I found Ann sitting on Sally, another time, pounding her with her little fists. Sometimes she took the pink blanket away from the crib. She was only a baby, herself, but I punished her to keep her from doing it again."

"Then you were busy with Sally and naturally turned Ann over to me," said Father. "She liked me but wanted you."

"Yes, I remember how she often came asking, 'Do you love me, Mama?' I would say, 'Of course,' but in a careless way. Really, she was so aggravating, pulling Sally's hair and snatching her toys, that I felt she had a disagreeable disposition."

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"That wasn't a good way to improve her disposition though, was it? I think I've heard you say that Sally was sweeter, right before the girls. You thought they didn't understand."

"But I'm afraid they did," the mother admitted. "Do you think Sally is selfish?"

"She can't help being selfish; we've been so partial to her. Suppose we try being partial to Ann for a while. It will do them both good."

"Ann mussed my curls!" shouted Sally next morning, rushing downstairs.

Mother was angry and started for the stairway, but Father's eyes warned her.

"Sally, you aggravate Ann by making so much of your curls," she said. Then she added, "Try to stop running to us with everything."

The surprised Sally went meekly upstairs.

"See the sunshine on Ann's hair!" exclaimed Father at breakfast. "How it brings out the gold!"

"Yes your hair is lovely, Ann," said Mother, "and you've combed it nicely. Straight hair has so much style. How about a ribbon? What color suits Ann's hair? Sally, you say. Her dress is neutral so her hair decides the choice."

Sally forgot herself in considering the headband, while Ann beamed with happiness over the unusual attention.

"That was fine," said Mother after the girls had gone off happily to school.

"Yes, it worked like magic," Father agreed, "but there will have to be a lot more of this. We can watch the teasing. When it stops, we shall know that Ann is no longer jealous of Sally and that we are treating the two girls fairly."

#### CONCERNING MANNERS

By Eva March Tappan, Ph. D.

My text is about the manners of two little children who called upon me, each with her mother. When Three-year-old was introduced, she put out her tiny hand and said with a charming smile, "How do you do? My mamma said you liked little girls." "Mamma" opened her bag and out came Three-year-old's best beloved doll. In two minutes Three-year-old was playing happily in the bay window, while her mother and I had the long talk that we wanted.

When Four-year-old called and her mother said, "This is my little daughter," she made no response to my greeting, but promptly seized my prettiest sofa pillow, threw it on the floor, and trampled over and over its delicate silk with her dusty sandals. Her mother said nothing, but when she rose to leave, she was quite severe with little Four-year-old because she neglected to make the formal curtsy that she had been taught.



"Evidently her home training in good manners consists in learning to make that curtsy," said a friend who was present.

But I fancied there was something more than that back of the difference between the two children. Of course calls on grown-ups are dull matters for small folk, but little Three-year-old had, by the thoughtful word of her mother, been put in a mood to please and be pleased, which is the foundation of pleasure in society. Poor little Four-year-old was "at odds with her environment," and her mother had not said the thoughtful word that might have helped her.

Whatever life may bring to a person, there is one thing certain--he will have to mingle with other people; and good manners which have their rise in a kindly feeling toward others will be a great help. Of whatever follies kings and queens have been guilty, they have generally realized that much of their popularity must rest upon the impression that their manners make upon people. Long before Queen Victoria could speak plainly, she was taught to make a little bow and say, "Morning, lady," or "Morning, sir," when anyone approached her little carriage. Years later, a sailor lifted her small daughter on board the royal yacht, saying, as he set her down, "There you are, my little lady."

"I'm a princess," the child retorted. "I'm not a little lady." The watchful mother said, "That is true. Tell the kind sailor that you are not a lady yet, but that you hope to be one some day."

How can children be taught courtesy? The foundation, of course, is to teach them by word and example to feel kindly towards the people around them. Show them the little ways of thoughtfulness by which they can express this kindness of feeling. Teach them not to save up their good manners for strangers, and emphasize this by treating them with the same courtesy you wish them to manifest.

"I like to have the Blanks come to play with my children," said a mother, "for they are never rude and rough in their games."

I was interested to ask the mother of the Blanks how she had brought this about.

"I really believe it is due to our after-supper hour," she replied thoughtfully. "For an hour after supper I do whatever the children choose and as one of them. We read aloud, we go for a walk, we make candy, we snowball one another, we play games, sometimes wild, rollicking games, and I do not ask for any special privilege on the ground of being a grown-up. But, of course, the children would not think of "tagging Mother" too roughly or making hard snowballs when one might happen to be thrown at her; and they won't quarrel about who shall stir the candy when they know that Mother is waiting for her turn. If they practice self-control and courtesy with me, they will be more likely to practice it with others."