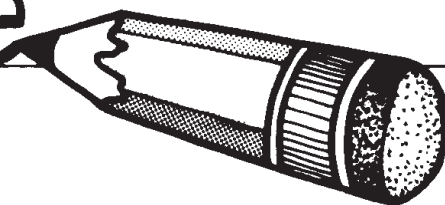


# Parenting Pipeline



*A newsletter for parents of fourth-grade children  
from the North Dakota State University Extension Service*

## The Social 4th Grader

### Friends and Fights

"I'll never talk to Melissa again!  
We're not friends anymore."



Sound familiar? Your fourth-grader may be going through some bewildering ups and downs with friends. It isn't unusual for your child to get into quarrels with other children. The arguments may be intense and wild but are usually brief. Learning to manage anger, control temper and limit quarreling by talking things out and compromising is a gradual process. This skill will develop through the years. Children learn from their experiences and by watching others.

It is difficult to watch your child experience these emotional times when he loses his temper. If you take these storms calmly, you will help your child learn to work things out peacefully. The experience of arguing with others is usually a lesson in understanding that there are a variety of styles and people in his world. Experiencing the consequences of these quarrels can help your child develop self-control.

## Expanding Friendships

During this year, people outside the family may become more important to your child. She is apt to become more deeply attached to best friends and be more selective about them. As your child's interests and acquaintances expand, she may choose friends you don't know. If she wants to spend time with a new friend, it may be a good idea to arrange get-acquainted visits between the two families. It is sometimes difficult for parents to realize how important these childhood friendships are to their child. If families cannot get together, invite your child's new friend to your home. This will allow you to meet and get acquainted. Most often you will be able to see very quickly why they enjoy each other. If you're concerned, it allows you to see what is happening so you can discuss it.

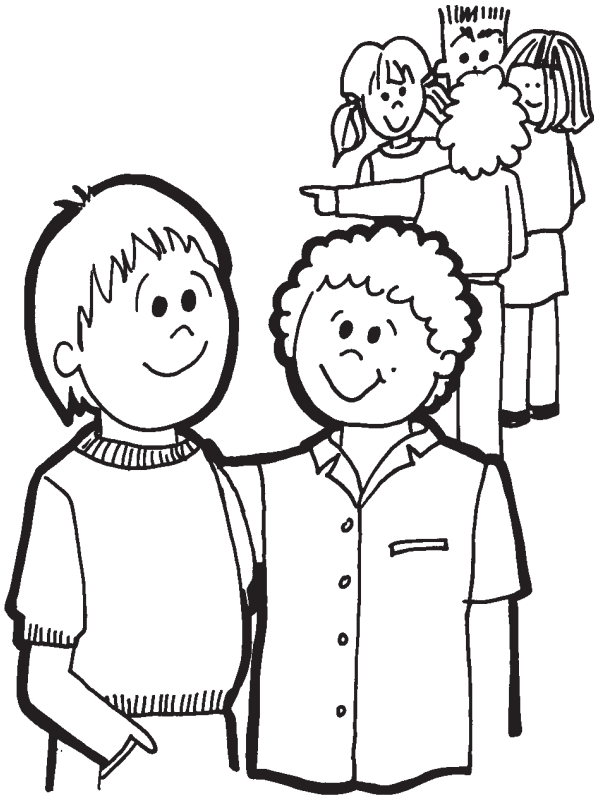
You may find there is a child who seems notorious for the explosions that occur every time he is with your child. Under such circumstances, you may feel the two are not the most trustworthy companions. If you suspect your child's least responsible behavior may be sparked by another child, you will want to take precautionary measures.

You may feel that this companion should be barred from your child. Yet, consider what your child may or may not learn from such a command. Rather than keep your child from that playmate, help the child know how to handle situations that arise. When together, you will want to be sure they are monitored closely so things are less likely to get out of hand.

By reminding your child of the responsible actions you expect before the two are together, he may either lead in acceptable activity or choose to play with that child less.

For example, Jack was a fairly quiet youngster, but whenever he was with Bill, they became very mischievous. Jack's mom was understandably disturbed by his behavior. She decided to keep a closer watch and see to it they had a variety of approved but exciting things

to do when they were together. This eliminated most problems. Many children are very active and imaginative at this age but lack the judgment skills needed to make good choices about appropriate behavior.



If you can spell out clear ground rules for your child and her companions in a calm, light and friendly way, you are apt to be successful in keeping her good will as well as holding her behavior within your boundaries. If another child's behavior is extremely troublesome, you may wish to intervene and give the child a helping hand. Once the two are separate again, help your child review what happened. You might even set up a signal for your child to ask you for help when they get into questionable behaviors. Most children will make wise choices when given understanding and support from an adult.

In the past, your child may have had little time for the opposite sex. This year may bring a new attraction between boys and girls. Since they are unsure of what to do about this new turn in their lives, they may escape to the familiar comfort of their own sex, where they can practice the art of making and losing friends without losing too much of their pride in the process.

Your child has a lot to learn about how to get along with the opposite sex. Through his day-by-day work and play with both boys and girls, he is slowly gaining knowledge that will help him during the dating, courtship and marriage days that may lie in the future. Don't be alarmed by this new interest. Be open and discuss relationships in a straightforward manner. Teasing and

mocking your child confuses and may embarrass him. This is an important issue to him. Avoid any teasing.

If your child has problems making and keeping friends, he will need your help and support. Remind him this is a learning process and that a good friend forgives and tries again.

## Challenge to Parents

This is an exciting year in your child's growth and development. Your child and her companions are learning that they can be friends and still have different ideas and customs. This is a major step in thinking. They may also question you about a variety of family beliefs, customs and traditions, or about your likes and dislikes, food preferences, fears, wishes, religious beliefs, values and more.

As your child explores these questions, you have the opportunity for important communication. Take the time to visit and explore this expanding world with your fourth-grader. Your child's basic values are being established between ages 8 and 10. Take these opportunities to share your perceptions while she is still open to you and your ideas.

You can't rescue your child or fix his problems forever. You can take the time now to talk out the dilemmas he faces and point out in a caring way how his behavior leads to certain consequences. These are wonderful opportunities that you won't want to miss!

This newsletter is published for North Dakota families with fourth-graders by the NDSU Extension Service and distributed through your county extension office. See your extension agent for more parenting information and other nutrition, youth and family programs.

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