



Oh Where, Oh Where Has Our Work Ethic Gone?

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Every parent and teacher's dream is to have children that internalize and display a good work ethic. The characteristics of consistent effort, perseverance and positive attitude combine to form the work ethic mindset. These qualities build the child's sense of personal responsibility and pride in their work.

When I was a classroom teacher, I delighted in those students who went the extra mile to complete assignments, because they held high expectations for their work. I often found their high expectations were a result of parental guidance and modeling of a good work ethic at home. In my later years of teaching, I noticed a decline in the number of students showing these abilities. I continued to expect high caliber work, but was often disappointed when students showed poor work attitudes and little effort.

Why has work ethic eroded over the years? Psychologists suggest that several changes in attitude toward work may have led to a weakening in effort. The first is that work is not always accepted as a necessary and routine part of life. If kids are often excused from daily tasks, they begin to think that work is optional, not a required part of family living. Another related change is that kids don't feel the sense of accomplishment from completing their work as they once did in earlier generations. They are

missing the self-esteem boost that comes from completing their jobs with skill and effort. The last is that kids often look upon work as too hard, so why should they try? They defeat themselves before they even begin, rather than look at the task as a challenge they can tackle.

What steps can parents take to develop work ethic? A great start is to call a family meeting to discuss work expectations at home and school. Let kids give input on chores, study times and consequences for work that doesn't meet guidelines. Next, set up a work schedule to get kids into a regular routine and keep them on track. Remember to model a strong work ethic by completing your tasks side by side with them. Most importantly, teach the work-related skills of patience and perseverance. Explain that work can be hard, boring or frustrating, but completing the job is the critical factor to achieving success.

As you help children build their work ethic, tell them they are developing key skills for their future careers. Employers look for workers who are dependable and committed to their jobs. Such employees increase the productivity (or amount of work completed) of the company. Employers value workers who are motivated and engaged in their job. If the time comes to downsize in a business, those with proven work ethic will have an edge on others less diligent. And when the time comes for company promotions, employees who have shown dependability, commitment and positive attitude will likely be the first to climb the ladder to better opportunities.



Financial Education Resources

The Kansas City Fed is committed to promoting economic and financial literacy and greater knowledge of the Federal Reserve's role by providing resources for teachers, students and the public. Visit our website at [KansasCityFed.org/education](https://www.kansascityfed.org/education) for more information.

"The Money Circle," Theme 2,

Lesson 1: Learn to Earn

This lesson shows that skills developed through more education or training lead to better careers and higher earning potential.

"It's Your Paycheck!"

Lesson 1: Invest in Yourself

This lesson demonstrates the importance of building human capital, or the knowledge, talent and skills people possess.

Fiction Books

"The Berenstain Bears and a Job Well Done" by Jan Berenstain

The bear cubs work together to clean their playhouse and learn lessons about finishing the job and doing their best. For ages 5-7.

"Learning about Work Ethic from the Life of Cal Ripken, Jr."

by Jeanne Strazzabosco

This biography of Cal Ripken, Jr. former shortstop for the Baltimore Orioles, focuses on the hard work he put into his baseball career. For ages 8-10.

"The Year Money Grew on Trees"

by Aaron Hawkins

Jackson Jones and his cousins take over an apple orchard and work hard to make it a successful venture. For ages 10-14.

What's Your Work Worth?

Use the work habits checklist to evaluate your work ethic. Read each sentence and circle "A" if it always describes you; "S" if it sometimes describes you; and "N" if it never describes you. Give yourself two points for each "A"; one point for each "S"; and zero points for each "N." Add the points column for your score, and find your "Worker Ranking" below!



WORK HABITS CHECKLIST

ALWAYS (2 pts.) • SOMETIMES (1 pt.) • NEVER (0 pts.)

I put effort into my work.	A	S	N
I finish the jobs I start.	A	S	N
I complete tasks on time.	A	S	N
I produce quality work.	A	S	N
I am proud of my work.	A	S	N
I meet work expectations at home and school.	A	S	N

My Work Habits Total: =

Worker Ranking:

9-12 points: "WOW Worker"

Your work ethic shines! Keep up the great job!

5-8 points: "Wise Worker"

Continue your efforts to make work ethic progress!

1-4 points: "Weak Worker"

Try to improve your work habits for a better work ethic!