Teaching Responsibility

Naturally, every parent is anxious to teach responsibility to their children. But responsibility cannot be imposed on children. It must grow from within. Children who are always told what to do may do their tasks very well, but they get little opportunity to use their own judgement and to develop a sense of responsibility. This only comes if they are given opportunities for choosing and decid­ing things for themselves.

A child is learning all the time. But if he is constantly criticized about his actions, he certainly doesn't learn responsibility. So the first lesson in inculcating a sense of responsibility is not to criticize.

Even if the answer to a child's request is a certain "Yes", it's so much better to leave the decision to the child. These are some of the ways in which you can build up their sense of responsibility and also heighten their self-confidence. Wherever and whenever you can, let them make the decisions themselves.

A child should be given the responsibility of choosing his own friends. But this is a delicate matter and needs careful handling. Obviously, it would be preferable for a shy child to have a friend who is an extrovert. And friends can also help to exert a beneficial and corrective influence on each other. In spite of all this, a child should always feel that he is free to choose the friends he wishes.

Let the child spend his allowance his way. If he wants to spend the whole lot on chewing gum or toffee, it's his decision. Don't in­terfere. These are just some of many ways in which responsibility is ta'ught.

12. Discuss the text in pairs. One of the pair will take the author's point of view and insist that children should be given opportunities to choose and decide things for themselves without any criticism on their parents' part. The other will defend the opposite point of view. Be sure to provide sound arguments for what­ever you say. Consider the following and expand if possible:

For:

(This column is to be filled by the students on the basis of Ex. 9. Consider also taking children into confidence.)

Against:

1. Children have no experience.  
   Parents' judgement and  
   advice are necessary.
2. Children will make mistakes  
   (some of them dangerous) and  
   at least sometimes they are  
   sure to be in the wrong.  
   Parents should explain such  
   things to them, criticizing  
   their actions.
3. The problem can be confusing  
   and complicated for the child  
   and even a simple one can be  
   solved in the wrong way. Who  
   will bear the consequences?
4. Children are too young to  
   decide whose influence is  
   good for them. They can't  
   distinguish petty features in  
   other children. So parents  
   should guide their children's  
   friendship.
5. Money is not to be wasted.  
   Children don't realize its  
   value and cannot use their  
   own discretion in spending it.
6. Children can gain experience  
   and responsibility taking after  
   their parents, following other  
   good examples.

13. The extracts given below present rather controversial subjects. Team up with another student, work out arguments "for" and "against" and discuss the extracts in pairs. Use conversational formulas (see Appendix).

A. Should a child be allowed to do **anything** he likes when he is ill?

"One of the worst tortures for a child is to stay in bed, especially when he is not terribly ill. So **anything** done to keep his mind occu-

pied in some way will pay wonderful dividends. It will enable you to get on with your work and prevent your child being peevish and crotchety while he's in bed."

B. Should parents help their children with their homework?  
"John must be a complete dud. He keeps on pestering me for

help with his homework. But I can't be bothered: I have a lot of housework. Besides I know nothing about teaching. How can I help John with his homework?"

C. Is play work for children?

" — I don't know what to do about my George. He just plays the whole time. He wants to touch and grab everything. As for being inquisitive — my, he wants to know everything in the world.

— Play may be recreation for an adult, but for a child it is work. Through play George gains experience; he learns by playing. He may play doctor, soldier, policeman, lawyer. But through play, he exercises not only his body but also his mind."

14. Role-Playing.