



the chart maker



Shannon Pifer

home: Tallahassee, Florida
 children: Jake, 8; Adam, 5; Luke, 3; Lily, 1
 age: 33
 job: Stay-at-home mom

smart system 1: a behavior chart

- A grid listing tasks ("I set the table") and good-behavior goals ("I didn't fight with my brother") hangs on the refrigerator.
- Each night, Pifer adds star stickers as rewards and talks about each boy's behavior: what they did a good job on that day, what they need to improve on tomorrow.
- Each star is worth a nickel, which goes into the boys' money boxes at the end of the week.
- To keep the kids interested, she updates the chores every month.

smart system 2: a summer schedule

- To combat boredom over the long summer break, Pifer posts a timetable on the refrigerator for snacks, play, chores, and TV.
- She makes a point of remaining flexible, "so we play with friends if someone drops by or watch a movie if it rains."

smart system 3: a cleaning chart

- Instead of trying to clean her whole house in one day, Pifer breaks the job down into half-hour tasks.
- She makes a list of daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning tasks and posts them on a chart that hangs on the side of a kitchen cabinet. "If I do one thing a day on a rotating schedule, it's much more manageable."

As a former certified teacher who taught 28 six-year-olds how to read and write, I realized that I could use classroom management tools at home. In the classroom, a schedule was critical for me as a disciplinary tool. My family needed the same kind of structure at home, so I created a series of charts and a summer schedule. My husband, Rob, and I decided we needed a way to hold the boys accountable for their behavior. Instead of saying, "Stop doing that," all day, we wanted a way to work on specific problems daily and reward them for their improvements. We also wanted to give them more responsibility around the house. "Disciplined but flexible" is our motto. We cherish and protect our family time. And our systems definitely give us more free time to read a book together or watch something fun on TV."

Top: Shannon Pifer, with Lily, pencils schedules into a day planner (center) before transferring them to her charts. Jake (left) earns a star for his chores. Opposite: Jake and his brothers show off their progress.

