



# 10 Pesky Questions Kids Ask

(and how to answer them!)

**By Arlene Pellicane**

# Pesky Question #1:

## **"Are we there yet?"**

Whether you're on a 9-hour road trip or a 30-minute drive across town, there's one question every parent hates to hear. *"Are we there yet?"*

The more frequently this question is repeated, the more it sounds like nails on a chalkboard.

Your child could be asking this question because he is (A) inquisitive, (B) impatient or (C) a combination of both. Or I suppose there's (D); he needs to pee.

After you rule out (D), here's how to answer *"Are we there yet?"*:

We should be at our destination in (name the amount of time).

Translate this amount of time in a way your child understands. Your older children will understand 4 hours. Your younger children might understand "the time it takes to watch two movies" or "We're almost halfway there."

Give your child updates every hour. "We have 2 more hours to go."

Now give your child an incentive to have self-control to keep his or her mouth shut in regards to the pesky question.

Hand each of your children a plastic bag with quarters in it. For every time they ask the question, they must hand over one quarter. That's the fee for asking the question *"Are we there yet?"*

At the end of the ride, they can keep the quarters that are left.

No need to escalate or get ugly. Just collect a 25 cent fee for every pesky question.

# **Pesky Question #2:**

**I don't want to do my chores.**

**Why do I have to do chores?**

The limp body. The dragging feet. The droopy eyes. This is the demeanor of a child who is dreading doing chores.

How would you like to give an unexpected reply to the question "*Why do I have to do chores?*"

The next time your children ask you this pesky question, head outside for a game. It could be soccer, basketball, Frisbee, or ping pong. Whatever you have handy and whatever you can create.

Let's say you pick soccer. You have a ball and you've created a goal. Instead of playing the normal way, omit a needed position. For instance, don't have a goalie.

Play this way and then talk about how it's not as fun to play without a goalie, is it?

Then have everyone be a goalie. Obviously, the game will be impossible to play.

If you're playing baseball, omit the pitcher.

If you're playing ping pong, have everyone on one side of the table with no opposing team.

*Case in point:* Chores are an important part of playing on the team. If you're going to be part of the family, you must "play your position" with chores. Every person is important. It doesn't work unless everyone pitches in. Everyone is important.

That's the "mom talk" presented in a memorable way with the game. It's the motivation behind the chores.

Now the next time after this pep talk that your child asks this pesky question, simply say that "every person on the team has to play" and then assign your child an extra chore for asking.

# Pesky Question #3:

## Do I really have to eat my vegetables?

No doubt you've noticed it's really easy for your children to eat a dinner of pizza, chips and soda. You never have to bargain with your child to finish. "If you eat those chips, I'll give you some broccoli."

But of course, what's *easy* to eat isn't usually what is *healthy* to eat.

Your child asks, "*Do I really have to eat these vegetables?*"

Often we say yes, but end up scraping off the uneaten veggies into the trash.

No more wasted nutrients!

Ask your children for their top three favorite vegetables. Do your best to incorporate these veggies into meals to make it a little easier for everyone.

Of course, there will be times when your child has to eat a vegetable he or she does not like. This is real life. Inform your eater that he or she will need to finish the vegetables before getting a second helping of anything. Don't pile on the food that they like. Withhold some of those favorite foods for the second plate – after the dreaded veggies are eaten.

Under no circumstances serve dessert to a child who hasn't finished his or her vegetables. With this consistent meal-time routine, your child will adjust to incorporating more veggies into their diet.

And the next time you visit the pediatrician, have your doctor explain to your child(ren) the importance of eating vegetables. For many children, hearing it from an authority will decrease future battles with you. After all, the *doctor* says...

# Pesky Question #4:

## Can I watch just one more show?

When your child is staring at the screen, he or she is not making a mess, getting in trouble, fighting with a sibling, or asking you to play. That's what makes this pesky question so tempting. *My, it would be nice to have another 30 minutes to get stuff done.*

But wait. Before you give that "just one more show" pass, you need to recognize the negative habits you are forming for your child:

Habits like:

- If I ask my mom to extend my screen time, she'll say yes. (And when you say no, you'll hear about it!)
- I can change the rules when it's good for me.
- Using free time for television shows instead of something more productive like play, reading, sports, or music.
- Being sedentary; most kids aren't doing jumping jacks and push-ups while they watch.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no screen time for children under 2 years old and 2 hours or less for kids age 2-18. Does your child's "one more show" push these recommended time limits?

When your child asks for "just one more show," the answer is no. Practice this before it happens. Say it out loud to gain confidence. You will say, "No."

No matter how much your child pushes back, flails, cries, or complains, the answer is still no.

Children learn language and emotional skills best by a real person, not a screen. You don't want to waste precious hours of your child's life and development with "just one more show."

# Pesky Question #5:

## Why do I have to do this dumb homework anyway?

Sometimes homework is too easy for a child and seems like mindless busywork. Other times, it's the opposite. It's so hard a child wonders why he or she should bother.

For the first scenario, set a timer to encourage your child to get the mindless busywork over with as soon as possible. Get books from the library that spark his/her interest and/or watch educational videos like [Khan Academy](#).

For the second scenario, websites like Khan Academy may also help your child understand his/her homework much better. Sit down with your child and drill math problems, learn vocabulary words, or read together. I know that may sound daunting and time consuming. Set a timer for 5-10 minutes a day to do this. You'll be amazed at the improvement that can take place after just working with your child intently for a few minutes a day.

I don't know many children who really *like* homework. The key is getting your child motivated to finish well and quickly. The self-control required to do something like routine homework is an important skill that transfers to the workplace, home, church, community service, really anywhere!

My son's class fifth grade class has a 100% club. The kids who do 100% of their homework (one miss is allowed) get special privileges like a pancake breakfast one morning and going off-campus to eat lunch together at the end of the year. You might create your own 100% club complete with perks for your child.

# Pesky Question #6:

## Why can't I go to this movie with my friends?

You might try the old "If your friends were jumping off a bridge, would you jump?" but that will probably trigger eye rolls and groans from your child.

Evaluate the pros and cons about the movie with your child using simple ABCs.

**Attitude:** How will your attitude be affected by the movie? Will you be more anxious? Inspired? Well informed? Filled with peace? Angry? Frightened? Confused? Will you generally have a better attitude toward God, your family members and friends because you saw the movie?

**Behavior:** How does the movie encourage you to behave? How does the main character solve problems? Is what is bad called good and vice versa? Is sexuality shown in a healthy way? Will you hear a lot of cursing that you may imitate?

**Character:** What character traits are exalted in the movie? Are the main characters good, moral people? How are family members portrayed?

Recognize that no matter how you explain your reason to your child, he or she may still be very unhappy with your decision. This is okay. Parenting is not a popularity contest. It's your job to protect your child's heart as best as you can while he or she is under your roof.

If you believe a movie is harmful to your child, it's your role to keep your child from seeing it. [Plugged In](#) from Focus on the Family gives helpful reviews of movies, as does [Common Sense Media](#).

# **Pesky Question #7:**

## **Why won't you let me spend the night at my friend's house?**

There's going to be a sleepover and many of your child's classmates will be there. But you don't know the child's parents and you've said no. Or perhaps you know the family and still don't feel comfortable having your child spend the night. You may like the parents but you don't know who else lives at the house or visits the house.

Explain to your child there are benefits to sleeping over but they often don't outweigh the risks. Sure you may have a fun time, but there is the potential for an older sibling, other friend, aunt, or whoever to do something harmful. Your child could be molested, dared to do something sexual or vile or cruel, offered drugs or porn, or shown a movie you would never allow.

Cater these explanations and scenarios to the age of your child. Younger children just need to hear "I'm sorry honey. Our family doesn't do sleepovers."

Don't feel pressured into letting your child sleep over if you believe the cons outweigh the pros. It can feel like you are being overly protective, but it's better to skip one social activity in order to protect your son or daughter from harm.

# Pesky Question #8:

## Why does my friend have a (insert item of greatness here) but I don't?

Whether it's a toy, skateboard, video game or cell phone, there will always be something that someone else has that your son or daughter wants.

Answer your child's question with this question, "Is that something you need or you want?"

If they determine it's something they *need*, then talk about how your child can make money to earn that item.

Most likely, it's something your child *wants*. Explain there are many things in life that you also want (a cruise to Europe, a designer bag, a maid for example) but that you can't always afford what you want. Toys are not in the budget. Or perhaps it's not a money issue; the issue is the item is not beneficial. The doll marketed for a five-year-old has way too much makeup on. The video game is too violent. Your child already has 25 stuffed animal cats and doesn't have space for another one.

As my husband likes to say, "Life is not fair. If you want fair, the fair is in Del Mar (that's where our state fair is located)."

Remind your child that compared to most kids in the world, he or she is rich in toys, clothes, sports equipment, and stuff. You can watch a video from [Compassion International](#) or [Samaritan's Purse](#) to help your child have newfound gratitude for what he or she does have.

## **Pesky Question #9:**

### **I'm bored. Can I play a game on your phone?**

Here's a sobering statistic: Since the year 2000, our attention span has shrunk by 40 percent. Forty percent! Attention span is the amount of concentrated time on a task without becoming distracted. Experts agree that being able to focus on a task is a key ingredient to success in school and life. Yet research says that a goldfish has a longer attention span than humans these days – yikes!

When you give your child your phone to fiddle with when he or she is bored, it contributes to this dire statistic. It trains his or her brain to seek amusement at the first sign of boredom. This constant noise of video games and television is a huge barrier to creative thought and the development of deeper thinking in your child.

Your phone may hold your child's attention when you want him/her to be quiet, but you are hindering his/her ability to *pay* attention in settings like the classroom, church or home. Screen time to prevent boredom teaches unrealistic things about life. Life is not always interesting. It's not full of instant answers, endless options for amusement, and constant rewards. When your child is used to having the pacifier of your phone, you are setting him or her up for trouble in the real world of learning and relating to people.

So, the next time your child asks you "Can I play a game on your phone?" the answer is no. Hand him or her a book instead. Tell your child, "I want you to have a longer attention span than a goldfish."

# **Pesky Question #10:**

**Do we have to go?**

**Please, can't we stay longer?**

You're at the park or a birthday party and it's time to go. Actually, it was time to go fifteen minutes ago. But your frolicking child does NOT want to leave. How do you answer the pesky question, "Do we *have* to go?"

You are the one who decides when it's time to leave; not your child. Yes, you may be influenced to stay longer when your child is having a blast, and that's fine. You might acquiescence with an "Okay, ten more minutes." But once that time has elapsed, stick with it and don't let your child persuade you to say a dozen goodbyes.

Give your kids a five-minute warning before it's time to leave. If you have a watch with a timer on it, go ahead and set it for five minutes and let your children hear it beep. Or you can have them look at the clock and say, "When it is 8:10 pm, we are going to leave."

Then leave. End of story. If there is weeping and whining, too bad. You are still leaving. If your children follow you to the car calmly and promptly, pour on the praise. "Thank you so much for coming to the car and for listening so well. That was fun and it will be great to come back here again."

If your child follows you with tears, tantrums, pleas, or a gazillion questions, simply head for the car and do whatever you have to do to get your children in the car. Tell your children they will be taking a break from that activity for a week or two. Let your children know you're happy to bring them to fun places as long as they can gratefully leave when it's time.

Do you have a pesky question  
that wasn't included in this Top 10 list?

Just hop over to  
[Arlene's Facebook page](#) and ask it there.

For more free resources like Arlene's Happy Home  
podcast, visit [www.ArlenePellicane.com](http://www.ArlenePellicane.com)