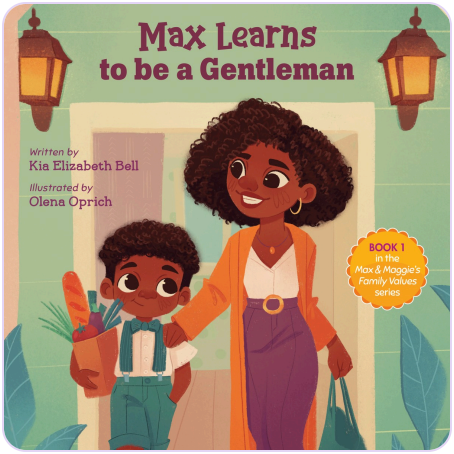
Max Learns to Be a Gentleman

AGES 2-6

Teacher Guide

Read-aloud questions, activities, and printables for toddler, preschool, and kindergarten groups.

About the book



Max Learns to Be a Gentleman shows young children that being a gentleman means noticing other people and choosing kindness. It is Book 1 in the Max & Maggie's Family Values series by Kia Elizabeth Bell, illustrated by Olena Oprich.

Max knows how to swing the highest, run the fastest, and jump the farthest, but he doesn't always know the thoughtful thing to do. When he sees Daddy pull out Mommy's chair at dinner, he asks how he can be a gentleman too. Daddy tells him to start by helping people and using good manners. Max helps his sister Maggie carry her heavy toy box, goes back to hold a gate he let slam, opens the car door for Maggie, shows another boy how to hold a gate, and gives his seat on the bus to a woman holding a baby. By the end, Max knows that being kind and respectful is what makes a gentleman.

Big idea: Being a gentleman means thinking about other people and choosing kindness, one small action at a time.

Themes: kindness, good manners, noticing what others need, respect, learning from a mistake, and learning by watching the people you love.

Book details: Paperback, ages 2 to 6. ISBN 9781625863188. Published 2025 by Credo House Publishers.

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How to use this guide

AGES 2-6

Pick the section for your group's age, read the book aloud, then choose one or two activities. Each section stands on its own, so a mixed-age center can use more than one.

Section	Ages	Best for	Time per activity
Toddlers	2	Toddler rooms, family child care	5 to 10 minutes
Preschool	3 to 4	Preschool and pre-K classrooms	10 to 20 minutes
Kindergarten	5 to 6	Kindergarten and transitional K	15 to 30 minutes

Reading tips for every age

- Read the book once just for enjoyment before using any questions or activities.
- Point to the faces. Maggie huffing over her toy box, the lady with the stroller, and the woman on the bus all show how Max's choices make people feel.
- Invite children to join in on Max's words, "Let me help!" and "Gentlemen hold doors," and to give a thumbs up when they notice a kind action. Point out Daddy's thumbs up when it appears.
- Connect the story to your classroom: holding the door at line-up, pushing in chairs at snack, and helping a friend carry something.

Including every child

- Every child can practice kindness in ways that work for them. Children might offer help, point out that someone needs assistance, choose a helpful item, or ask a grown-up to help.
- When you talk about Max's family, say "Mommy" and "Daddy." When children talk about their own homes, say "your family" or "the people who care for you."
- Let children answer by pointing, acting it out, choosing a picture, or speaking in their home language.
- Kindness can look different for each child: noticing someone who needs help, offering help, saying thank you, or trying again after a mistake.

Safety: An adult holds any real door or gate while children practice, and keeps little fingers away from hinges and latches. Use light boxes and baskets for carrying. Adults choose and supervise every activity.

Skills labels

Each age section ends with short skill codes. The full wording is in Standards at a glance at the end. The codes come from three frameworks:

- **ELOF:** the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, used for toddlers (IT goals) and preschoolers (P goals).
- **Common Core:** the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, used for kindergarten. Many states use these or a close version.
- **CASEL:** the five social and emotional learning competencies, used across all ages: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

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Words to know

AGES 2-6

Introduce two or three words before reading, then point them out in the story. Toddlers need only the starred words; act them out instead of defining them.

Word	Kid-friendly meaning	Try this
help*	Do something to make a job easier for someone	Say "Let me help!" and hand a friend a toy
kind*	Doing or saying something nice for someone	Name one kind thing a friend did today
thank you*	Words we say when someone helps us	Say "thank you" when a friend passes the crayons
heavy*	Hard to lift or carry	Compare a scarf and a small basket of blocks, then carry the basket with a friend
gentleman	A boy or man who is kind and thinks about other people	What is one thing Max did to be a gentleman?
manners	Kind ways we act and talk with other people	Say "please" and "thank you" at snack
thoughtful	Thinking about how someone else might feel or what they might need	What could you do for a friend whose hands are full?
struggling	Having a hard time doing something	Show a struggling face, like Maggie with her toy box
respectful	Treating people and their things with care	Wait for your turn to talk
proud	Feeling pleased about something you did or worked hard on	Show a proud smile, like Max

*Starred words work well for toddlers. If your class read Book 2, *Maggie Helps Mommy*, ask how Max helps Maggie in that story.

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Toddlers

AGE 2

Toddlers learn kindness by copying the people around them, just like Max watches Daddy. Keep reading short, let them point and act, and practice each kind action right away.

Read-aloud tips

- Read in a small group of three or four, or one on one.
- Pause at "Let me help!" so children can say it with Max.
- Give a thumbs up together when you notice Max doing something kind. Point out Daddy's thumbs up when it appears.
- Skip words if attention runs short. The pictures tell the story.

Questions to ask while reading

Choose a few questions that fit your group. You don't need to ask them all.

- Where is Max? Can you point to Daddy?
- What is Daddy doing with Mommy's chair?
- Is the toy box heavy? Who helps Maggie?
- Can you show me a thumbs up, like Daddy?
- Who is holding the baby on the bus?

Activities

1. **Let me help.** Fill a small, light box with soft toys. Pretend it is too heavy and ask, "Can you help me?" Two children carry it together while everyone says, "Let me help!" Then the helpers hear "Thank you!"
2. **Door holder.** At line-up time, a child stands next to you while you hold the classroom door open. Friends say "thank you" as they walk through. Give every child a turn over the week.
3. **Sit by me.** At circle time, a child pats the carpet square next to them and invites a friend: "Sit here!" It's just like Max offering his seat on the bus. The friend says "thank you." Name it out loud: "You saved a spot for Jada. That was kind."

What to notice: A child copies a kind action, helps carry something with a friend, or says or signs "thank you."

Skills: ELOF IT-SE 5, IT-SE 8, IT-ATL 6, IT-LC 9, IT-LC 12 · CASEL social awareness, relationship skills

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Preschool

AGES 3-4

Preschoolers can start to notice when someone needs help and choose a kind thing to do or say. Use the questions to move from what Max did to what children can do in your room.

Choose a few questions that fit your group. You don't need to ask them all.

Before reading

- Look at the cover. What is Max carrying? Who is with him?
- Have you heard the word "gentleman"? What do you think it means?

During reading

- Why did Daddy pull out Mommy's chair?
- Look at Maggie's face, hands, and toy box. What tells you this is hard for her?
- Max let the gate slam at the park. What did he do next?
- How did the lady with the stroller feel? How do you know?
- Why did Max give the woman his seat on the bus?

After reading

- What kind things did Max do in the story?
- How did Max feel when Daddy gave him a high-five?
- How can you tell when a friend needs help?
- What can you say when someone helps you?

Activities

1. **Kindness station of the day.** Set up one station a day for a week, led by one teacher: hold the door (the teacher holds it), carry a light box with a partner, offer a seat (a row of chairs as a pretend bus), and push in chairs after snack. Repeat a favorite on the fifth day. Children take turns being the helper and practice saying "thank you" when they are helped.
2. **Story sequence and retell.** Use the five printable story cards in this guide: the chair at dinner, the toy box, the gate at the park, the boy at the gate, and the bus. Start with two or three cards, like the chair and the bus, then add the others as children get to know the story. Children put the cards in order and retell what happened, using "first, next, then, last."
3. **Kind words puppets.** Give each pair of children two puppets. One puppet has a problem (hands full, a heavy bag, no seat). The other offers help by asking first, the way Max does on the bus: "Would you like to sit here?" or "Can I help you carry that?" The first puppet answers "Yes, please" or "No, thank you," and the helper listens to the answer. Then they switch.

Extension: Keep a "Thumbs up!" board. When a child sees a friend do something kind, add a paper thumbs-up with both names, just like Daddy's thumbs up for Max.

What to notice: A child notices when a friend needs help, offers help or uses kind words without a reminder, or retells the story's main events in order.

Skills: ELOF P-SE 2, P-SE 3, P-SE 7, P-ATL 10, P-LIT 4, P-LIT 5 · CASEL social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making

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Kindergarten

AGES 5-6

Kindergartners can talk about how a character changes and use the words and pictures to explain their thinking. Use this section to dig into Max's choices and connect them to children's own lives.

Discussion questions

Choose a few questions that fit your group. You don't need to ask them all.

- Who are the characters in this story? Where does it happen?
- At the beginning, Max knows how to swing the highest and run the fastest. What doesn't he know yet? What does he know by the end?
- When Max let the gate slam, he thought, "Oops." What did he do next? Why does it matter that he went back?
- Look at the woman's face on the bus. How did Max's choice make her feel? How do you know?
- What does Max notice on the bus? What does he decide to do without being reminded?
- Max told another boy, "Gentlemen hold doors." The story says Max spoke kindly. How could you say his words in a kind voice?
- Mommy says Max will always be a gentleman as long as he keeps being kind and respectful. What does it look like to be respectful?
- Kia Elizabeth Bell wrote the words and Olena Oprich drew the pictures. What did each of them do to tell the story?

Activities

1. **Our class kindness book.** Each child draws a time they did something kind for someone, then writes or dictates: "First I noticed ___. Then I ___. I felt ___." Afterward, you can ask: "What did the other person say or do?" Bind the pages into a class book for your library.
2. **Oops, try again.** Use two puppets to act out a small everyday mistake, like one puppet letting a door swing shut on the other or bumping into someone in line. Ask the group how the puppet could fix it, then act it out again the kind way, just like Max did at the gate. Talk about it: How did the puppet fix the mistake? What did the other puppet need?
3. **Max and Maggie compare.** In Book 2, *Maggie Helps Mommy*, Max helps Maggie carry a heavy laundry basket and calls himself a gentleman. If you have both books, read them and make a two-circle chart: how Max helps, how Maggie helps, and what both of them do.

What to notice: A child uses details from the words or pictures to explain a character's feelings, describes how Max changed, fixes a mistake with a kind action, or tells events in order in a drawing or sentence.

Skills: Common Core RL.K.1, RL.K.3, RL.K.6, RL.K.7, RL.K.9, SL.K.1, W.K.3 · CASEL self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making

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A Note for Families

AGES 2-6

From your child's classroom

Dear families,

This week we read *Max Learns to Be a Gentleman* by Kia Elizabeth Bell. In the story, Max watches his dad pull out his mom's chair and asks how he can be a gentleman too. He practices kind actions: helping his sister carry a heavy toy box, holding a gate, and giving his seat on the bus to a woman holding a baby. We talked about noticing when someone needs help, using kind words, and trying again after a mistake.

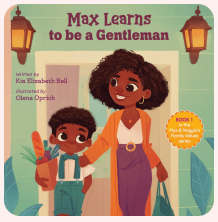
At home, try asking your child: "Who did you help today?" Then notice and name their kindness: "You held the door for Grandma. That was thoughtful!" Children learn kindness by watching the people they love, just like Max.

Kind things to try

AGE 2 Say "thank you," hand someone a napkin, help carry a light bag with a grown-up

AGES 3-4 Hold a door with a grown-up, offer to share a toy, help a sibling clean up

AGES 5-6 Pull out a chair for someone at dinner, offer help before being asked, hold the door for the person behind you



Free Max & Maggie games and activity pages are at **kiabell.com**.

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Story Cards

AGES 3-6











For teachers

Print these five cards and cut them apart. For younger children, start with two or three cards and add the rest over time. Children put them in story order and retell what happens on each one.

The cards are lettered out of order so the letters don't give away the answer.

Answer key: C (Daddy pulls out the chair), A (helping Maggie with the toy box), E (holding the gate for the stroller), D (showing the boy how to hold the gate), B (giving his seat on the bus).

Cut along the dashed lines.

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Standards at a Glance

AGES 2-6

Use these tables as a lesson-planning reference. The first shows which skills each activity supports; the second gives each standard's full wording.

Skills by activity

Age	Activity	ELOF or Common Core	CASEL
2	Let me help	IT-SE 5, IT-SE 8	Relationship skills
2	Door holder	IT-SE 8, IT-ATL 6	Social awareness
2	Sit by me	IT-SE 5, IT-ATL 6	Social awareness
2	Read-aloud questions	IT-LC 9, IT-LC 12	Not a focus
3 to 4	Discussion questions	P-LIT 5	Social awareness
3 to 4	Kindness station of the day	P-SE 2, P-ATL 10	Relationship skills, responsible decision-making
3 to 4	Story sequence and retell	P-LIT 4, P-LIT 5	Not a focus
3 to 4	Kind words puppets	P-SE 3, P-SE 7	Relationship skills
3 to 4	Thumbs up! board	P-SE 7	Social awareness
5 to 6	Discussion questions	RL.K.1, RL.K.3, RL.K.6, RL.K.7, SL.K.1	Self-awareness, social awareness
5 to 6	Our class kindness book	W.K.3	Self-awareness, social awareness
5 to 6	Oops, try again	SL.K.1	Self-management, responsible decision-making
5 to 6	Max and Maggie compare	RL.K.9	Social awareness

Full wording

Code	Full wording
IT-SE 5	Child imitates and engages in play with other children.
IT-SE 8	Child expresses care and concern towards others.
IT-ATL 6	Child demonstrates emerging initiative in interactions, experiences, and explorations.
IT-LC 9	Child attends to, repeats, and uses some rhymes, phrases, or refrains from stories or songs.

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Standards at a Glance (continued)

AGES 2-6

Code	Full wording
IT-LC 12	Child comprehends meaning from pictures and stories.
P-SE 2	Child engages in prosocial and cooperative behavior with adults.
P-SE 3	Child engages in and maintains positive interactions and relationships with other children.
P-SE 7	Child expresses care and concern toward others.
P-ATL 10	Child demonstrates initiative and independence.
P-LIT 4	Child demonstrates an understanding of narrative structure through storytelling/re-telling.
P-LIT 5	Child asks and answers questions about a book that was read aloud.
RL.K.1	With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.
RL.K.3	With prompting and support, identify characters, settings, and major events in a story.
RL.K.6	With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.
RL.K.7	With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).
RL.K.9	With prompting and support, compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in familiar stories.
SL.K.1	Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
W.K.3	Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened.

Sources

- Head Start ELOF: Social and Emotional Development, Infant/Toddler
- Head Start ELOF: Social and Emotional Development, Preschool
- Head Start ELOF: Approaches to Learning, Infant/Toddler
- Head Start ELOF: Approaches to Learning, Preschool
- Head Start ELOF: Language and Communication, Infant/Toddler
- Head Start ELOF: Literacy, Preschool
- Common Core: Kindergarten Reading Literature
- Common Core: Kindergarten Speaking and Listening
- Common Core: Kindergarten Writing
- CASEL: What Is the CASEL Framework?

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