

- Phrase requests for appropriate behavior positively, such as “Put the book down,” rather than “Don't touch the book.”
- Call attention to unacceptable behavior as soon as it begins; use distraction to change the behavior or offer alternatives to annoying actions, such as exchanging a quiet toy for one that is too noisy.
- Give advance notice or “friendly reminders,” such as “When the TV program is over, it is time for dinner,” or “I'll give you to the count of three, and then we have to go.”
- Be attentive to situations that increase the likelihood of misbehaving, such as overexcitement or fatigue, or decreased personal tolerance to minor infractions.
- Offer sympathetic explanations for not granting a request, such as “I am sorry I can't read you a story now, but I have to finish dinner. Then we can spend time together.”
- Keep any promises made to children.
- Avoid outright conflicts; temper discussions with statements, such as “Let's talk about it and see what we can decide together,” or “I have to think about it first.”
- Provide children with opportunities for power and control.

## **General Guidelines for Implementing Discipline**

Regardless of the type of discipline used, certain principles are essential to ensure the efficacy of the approach (see [Family-Centered Care](#) box). Many strategies, such as behavior modification, can only be implemented effectively when principles of consistency and timing are followed. A pattern of intermittent or occasional enforcement of limits actually prolongs the undesired behavior, because children learn that if they are persistent, the behavior is permitted eventually. Delaying punishment weakens its intent, and practices such as telling the child, “Wait until your father comes home,” are not only ineffectual but also convey negative messages about the other parent.