

# Disciplining Your Child at Any Age



Each child is different, but most children need to be given clear rules about behavior. Discipline needs to start as soon as a child is pulling up and crawling. Infants rely on their parents to provide a safe environment. Discipline should be adjusted by the age of your child. And it should teach age-appropriate behaviors.

## Things to keep in mind

Some general values about discipline include:

- Be a good role model for your child.
- Try to recognize and praise your child when they are being good.
- Make sure rewards for good behavior happen right away.
- Hug your child after using discipline. Make sure the child knows it's the behavior you're not happy with, not your child.
- Don't use physical punishment.

## How to lessen unwanted behavior

Try not to reward a child or give positive support for a bad behavior. For example, if your child is having a tantrum, giving them a cookie to be quiet is a reward for the bad behavior. To help lessen bad behavior, try these tactics:

- Don't give positive support for bad behavior. Instead, try ignoring the behavior as long as it is not dangerous behavior.
- Have the behavior result in an unpleasant result, such as punishment.

Punishment has 2 forms, including:

- Denying your child privileges or a desired activity. This may be limiting TV or screen time or saying "no" to dessert.
- Requiring an activity that isn't fun. This may include doing chores or having a "time out."

A behavior can also have a natural result that's like punishment. For example, a child who won't eat may go to bed hungry.

Keep in mind that spanking and other forms of physical punishment aren't helpful. This type of discipline teaches a child aggressive behavior.

## Tips for discipline by age

Discipline often depends on the age of a child, and how much they understand their behavior. These are some tips for discipline by age group.

## Babies and toddlers

- Safety is the main concern. Provide a safe environment that decreases the chances of things being broken by the child.

- Babies will respond to a loud, firm voice saying "no."
- After saying "no," direct your child to a good behavior, such as a toy.
- Don't reward bad behavior. Ignore temper tantrums. But confront other problems, such as biting or hitting.
- Praise and reward good behavior.

## Preschoolers

- Preschoolers need clear and consistent rules.
- This age group needs time to get ready for the next activity. Give your child a warning before it's time to stop playing.
- Preschoolers need lots of explanation as to why things are being done.
- Use time-out for bad behavior. Use 1 minute for each year of age.
- Use praise for good behavior.

## School-aged children

- Give your child chances to explain their side and opinion.
- Let your child express their feelings and concerns.
- Give your child choices.
- Give your child chances to help solve problems together regarding their behavior.

## Teens

- This age group needs patient and understanding parents. They will test all limits.
- Teens need to be told the long-term outcomes of bad behaviors.
- Teens need to be involved with limit-setting, based on their maturity.

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