



Illustration by  
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# TEACHING GOOD BEHAVIOR: TIPS ON HOW TO DISCIPLINE

## DISCIPLINE IS HOW PARENTS TEACH THEIR CHILDREN

- Praise success and good tries.
- Be clear and consistent about what you expect.
- Listening is important; let your child finish the story before helping to solve the problem.
- Praising your child for good behavior works most of the time, but you will still need to set limits.
- Sometimes a time-out is needed for either you or your child.

**A**ll children want to be good and please their parents, but they need to learn how. Young children view the world as “good and bad” or “right and wrong”—nothing in between.

Teach your child right from wrong with words and actions. Children need to know when they do something bad and when they do something good.

Praising your child will encourage good behavior and reduce bad behavior, but part of a parent’s job is to correct bad behavior.

## TEACH ALL THE STEPS

What seems simple, like getting dressed in the morning, has many steps for children. If your child “can’t” or “won’t” do something, it may be that your child still needs to learn the steps.

Explain the steps one at a time and then offer praise.

For example,

1. “Please get your clothes. They are on the bed.”
2. “OK, now take off your pajamas.”
3. “Now, put on your shirt.”
4. “You look very nice today. You did a good job getting dressed.”

Take time to remind your child about each step rather than doing it yourself or getting upset. It will take longer at first, but it is well worth it! Learning new skills makes your child more confident.

## CATCH YOUR CHILD BEING GOOD

Watch for good behavior like listening to you, being polite, and helping others. Praise good behavior as often as possible. You can even praise a good try!

- “Nice tower. Look how high you built it!”
- “Good sharing. I love it when you play so nicely with your sister.”

Your love and attention are what your child needs and wants. But sometimes children learn that the way to get attention is to misbehave. Teach your child that being good is the best way to get your attention. Praise with words, but remember that a hug or a smile is often just right!

Children love to help. A good way for your child to get your attention is by helping with chores like folding laundry, setting the table, or assisting with simple repairs. Smile and say, “Thanks for your help!”



Children think they are special, and they are! Self-respect is the first step toward learning how to respect others. Children who are loved feel that they are special and learn that other people are special too. It's okay to say,

- “You’re a great helper!”
- “Good job!”

**When children are doing something good, let them know it by saying, “I like it when you...”**



## CHILDREN NEED LIMITS

Nobody is perfect; that’s why patience is needed. When your child needs to be corrected,

1. Name the bad behavior.
2. Tell your child that the behavior needs to stop. “No hitting! That’s not nice.”

While children respond best to praise for good behavior, sometimes other types of discipline are needed.

### TIME-OUT—Setting limits for 2- to 5-year-olds

When saying “no” is not enough, try using a time-out. It teaches your child that misbehaving is not a good way to get your attention and it stops the bad behavior. When the time-out is over, you and your child can start all over again.

Steps for giving a time-out are:

1. Warn your child: “If you don’t stop, you’ll have a time-out.”
2. If your child misbehaves again, briefly explain the reason. For a 2-year-old, simply say, “No hitting.”
3. Have your child go to a quiet place, like the corner of a room.
4. Start the timer—1 minute for each year of age.
  - 2 years old = 2 minutes
  - 3 years old = 3 minutes
  - 4 years old = 4 minutes
  - 5 years old = 5 minutes

If your child leaves the time-out area,

- Have your child go back.
- Restart the timer.
- Explain the need to “stay put” until it’s over.

Other adults caring for your child (grandparents, baby-sitters, aunts, and uncles) also need to know how a time-out works.

### Other Ideas

Time-outs can be used too much. Other ways to correct your child’s behavior include:

- **Ignoring.** When your child is doing something that is not dangerous to get your attention, try ignoring the behavior.
- **Redirecting.** Sometimes children misbehave because they are bored or don’t know any better. Find something else for your child to do.

Correcting a child’s behavior can be hard. Talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

## SET CLEAR RULES

Help your child learn the rules by making them plain. “It’s time for bed sweetheart. Please get in your bed now. Then we can read a story. I’m glad you got ready for bed so quickly. I love reading to you at night.”

Children will almost always test a new rule for the first few days. Hold fast; say it again and again and your child will learn the new rule. Be consistent, even when it seems like a lot of trouble!

## LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD

Children are learning and experiencing many new things every day, and they want to share them. Spend time every day playing and talking with your child. Talk about the good and fun parts of the day as well as any bad or tough times.

If your child had a hard time,

1. Listen to the whole story. Without judging or talking about how to behave, let your child finish telling the entire story.
2. Find positive parts of the story to praise.
3. Teach better ways of behaving and responding.

Questions you can ask at dinner or bedtime include:

- “Tell me about what you did today.”
- “What was your favorite thing that happened today?”
- “Was there anything that was hard or that you needed help with today?”

## WHEN YOUR CHILD MAKES YOU ANGRY

Sooner or later, all parents get frustrated. Remember that no matter how difficult your child can be, you are the most important person in your child's life.

If you feel out of control, first make sure your child is in a safe place, like a playpen, crib, or bedroom. Then take a "time-out" for yourself.

Do something that you find relaxing to help you calm down.

- Have a cup of tea or coffee.
- Listen to music.
- Call a friend or spouse.
- Read.
- Meditate.



Feeling stressed out is natural and it will pass. When you are feeling better, go back to your child, hug each other, and start over again.

If your child is old enough, you can simply say, "I got really mad when you wouldn't listen. I'm feeling better now. I love you."

When you raise your child with praise, you will both be happier. But it takes a lot of patience and time!

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