

Learning About Discipline for Children

What is discipline for children?

When you discipline your child, you reward the behavior you want to see. You don't reward behavior you don't like. This allows your child to understand the difference between desired and undesired behavior. The way you discipline must be right for your child's age.

Children can have many strong emotions. They don't always fully understand or control them. So they don't always listen to you or behave in correct ways.

Children need guidance, clear limits, and patient parents during their struggles with behavior and emotions.

Why is using good discipline important?

Effective discipline can help teach your child responsibility. It can also build self-esteem and strengthen your relationship with your child. It is one way to show that you love and care about your child.

What techniques should you use to discipline children?

No single technique works for all situations. It is best to try a variety of skills and approaches.

Whatever you do, be patient and do your best to be consistent about the limits you set.

For younger children:

- **Ignore annoying behavior when possible.** Ignore behavior that will not harm your child, such as whining and temper tantrums. When you ignore these things, you take away the attention your child is seeking. This only works if you praise your child's positive actions. Never ignore behavior that could be dangerous.
- **Redirect behavior.** Try to distract a child who is starting to misbehave. For example, if your child has trouble sharing a toy, show your child another toy.

For children of any age:

- **Use facial expressions and body language** to show how you feel about your child's actions. Older children can also be told that their actions have made you feel upset, sad, or angry.
- **Use logical consequences.** Be sure what you do to discipline your child fits the action. For example, if your child writes on the wall with crayons, have the child help you wash it. Take away the crayons for a short time.
- **Use natural consequences.** These are results that happen naturally. For example, if your child throws ice cream on the floor, it can't be eaten. Don't get your child more ice cream. Only use natural consequences that are safe for your child.
- **Reward positive actions.** Tell your child what you expect and what the rules are. Reward your child when those rules are followed. A reward can be as simple as giving praise and hugs.
- **Make it easy to succeed.** Help your child meet your expectations by providing the right tools. For example, put baskets in the bedroom to make cleaning up easier.
- **Model correct behavior.** Patiently show your child the right way to behave or do a chore.
- **Try using "time-out" to stop aggressive behavior.** Time-out means that you remove your child from a stressful situation for a short period of time.
- **Do not spank or use other corporal punishment.** Corporal punishment includes hitting or slapping your

child, or denying bathroom privileges. It is not a useful way to manage behavior. It teaches a child that physical force is the way to resolve conflict. It can embarrass and humiliate your child. And it can make your child resent and not trust you.

- Ask your doctor or call a local hospital for information on parenting classes. These are offered in most communities.

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