

# Learning About Time-Outs

## What is a time-out?

Time-out means that you remove your child from a stressful situation for a short period of time. It works best when your child is old enough to understand. This usually begins around three years of age.

Time-out is not a punishment. It is an opportunity for the child to calm down or regain control of their behavior. It works best when children understand why it is being used.

## When should you use a time-out?

Time-out works best when your child is doing something your child knows is not acceptable and won't stop, such as hitting or biting.

Time-out is not effective if it is used too often or if it is used for behaviors that are not within a child's control. For example, time-out is not appropriate for a child who accidentally wets their clothes instead of using the toilet.

## How do you give a time-out?

Before you start a time-out:

- Find a timer to use.
- Select a place in your home for time-out. It needs to be a place without distractions. Do not use a bedroom. Do not choose a dark, scary, or dangerous place. A chair in the hallway or corner of a room may work best.
- Practice the time-out procedure with your child when your child is in a good mood. Explain that bad behavior, such as throwing food or not sharing toys, will result in a time-out.

To give a time-out, follow these steps:

1. Explain why your child is going to time-out. State only once, "Time-out for having a temper tantrum."
2. Direct or take your child to the time-out place. If you need to carry your child, hold your child facing away from you.
3. Set the timer for the time-out period. The rule of thumb is 1 minute for each year of age, with a maximum of 5 minutes for time-out.
4. At the end of time-out, say to your child, "Okay, time-out is over." And let your child know in some way that you love them, such as a hug.

While your child is in time-out:

- Stay calm, and do not act angry.
- Find something to do, such as reading a magazine.
- Don't talk about your child.