

Sensible Consequences

What is the concern?

At some point, all children misbehave. Parents can help their children learn better behavior by setting clear limits, using proper discipline, and having their children practice the desired behavior.

What will my child learn from sensible consequences and limits?

Sensible consequences involve parents acting on misbehaviors right away and giving a consequence that is equal to or fits the seriousness of the misbehavior. Consequences teach children to be responsible and to think about possible negative results if they misbehave.

Sensible consequences not only stop problem behaviors – they also teach children how to make up for what they have done, prevent future problems, and help them practice new skills.

What are some examples of sensible consequences?

- **Loss of Privilege** – After misbehavior, remove the activity or object that is logically tied to that misbehavior. For example, if toys are left out in the family room and your child is expected to clean up after playing, he will not be allowed to play with the toys for a specified period of time.
- **Positive Practice** – Have your child practice the correct way of behaving when misbehavior occurs. This type of punishment educates as well as disciplines. It teaches the child the correct behavior and punishes the misbehavior. For instance, if your child runs down the aisle at the store, he must walk slowly down the aisle three times.
- **Time Out** – Remove your child from enjoyable activities when she needs to calm down, does something dangerous, or breaks a known rule. For example, if your child is aggressive or clearly breaks an established rule, she should go to time out immediately with a brief explanation. “You hit your sister, so you have to go to time out.”

What are the steps in applying a sensible consequence?

- 1) Decide on the consequence and tell your child what you plan to do in response to misbehavior. If the misbehavior occurs frequently, you can warn her before it happens again. For example: “Your toys are all over the family room floor. If you decide not to put them away, you will not be allowed to play with them for one day.”
- 2) If your child still engages in the misbehavior after you state the sensible consequence, **follow through** with the consequence. **DO NOT** give in or fight with him about the consequence. Also, **DO NOT** lecture or argue.
- 3) If your child refuses to cooperate with the sensible consequence, use time out as a cooling off period and then try again.



Tips to Remember:

- Act on misbehaviors right away.
- Use sensible consequences: loss of privilege or positive practice.
- If necessary, use time out as a cooling off period, then have your child go through the sensible consequence.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

By Doug Tynan, PhD
Deborah Miller, PhD
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Special Playtime

What is the concern?

Children thrive on attention from parents and work very hard to get a “connection” with you. This even includes the attention they receive from undesired behaviors. While some parents believe that scolding or lecturing can teach a child to act better, this is not always the case. For many children, any attention—even scolding and nagging—achieves their goal for an immediate connection. As a rule, any of your child’s positive or negative behaviors followed by a lot of your attention will usually be repeated more often.

How can “special playtime” encourage my child’s positive behaviors?

In order to increase your child’s positive behaviors, you need to give attention at the right time. Break the cycle of nagging and arguing by catching your child “being good” during special, one-on-one time. A strategy called “special playtime” can be very rewarding.

- First, choose a special playtime at the same time each day. For 15 minutes per day, give your child undivided attention. Turn off the phone and TV and remove other distractions. Also, if you have other children, find something else for them to do during this time, like playing quietly or reading a book.
- Give your child a choice of play activities and sit on the floor to play. If your child doesn’t choose something he or she would like to do, go ahead and pick an activity. As you start to play with a toy, talk about it. For example, say things like, “We’re getting out the cars and we’re going to put together the track to see how fast they are.”
- Use toys that lend themselves to quiet activity, such as building blocks, car or train sets, doll houses, toy farms, or craft items like modeling clay or crayons and paper. Avoid competitive video games, TV, board games, boxing gloves, toy guns or swords, and games that encourage the type of behavior you want to decrease.
- After your child starts playing, keep talking about what he or she is doing—like a sports-caster describing a game. Try not to ask questions, give commands or directions, or tell your child how to play. Remember, there is no “right” way to play.
- Make sure to praise when your child is doing something that you want to see. If your child puts the toys away, praise the behavior by saying something like, “I love how you are putting your toys away so carefully!”
- Ignore minor or annoying behavior but address disruptive behavior. If your child becomes disruptive (for example: throwing toys), warn once. If the undesired behavior reoccurs, end your special time early and say something like, “We will stop playing now and will play again tomorrow.” If you do this once, you probably will never have to do it again.
- During playtime observe, comment, and relax. This should be an enjoyable time for both of you.

Why should I have special playtime with my child?

- Special playtime gives you and your child a chance to have fun, enjoy each other, and build your relationship.
- Paying attention to quiet, thoughtful play increases that type of play and helps your child have a longer attention span.
- Your child will learn to tune in to your normal voice and to listen when you’re speaking quietly.
- Special playtime, when done again and again, will encourage positive behaviors.



Tips to Remember:

- Catch your child being good and reward with positive attention.
- Create a special playtime for you and your child.
- Try to set aside time for special playtime everyday.
- Praise your child often during special playtime.
- Remember, there is no “right” way to play.
- During special playtime, ignore bad behavior unless it is disruptive.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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Planned Ignoring

What is the concern?

Some childhood behaviors are not harmful yet they can be very annoying and frustrating for parents. Many of these behaviors occur often. You probably know what it feels like when a child whines a lot, interrupts adult conversations, or misbehaves while you are on the phone. Parents usually respond to these behaviors by correcting or yelling at the child. However, a much more effective and powerful approach is to ignore your child's behavior.

What is planned ignoring?

Ignoring is the opposite of paying attention. It is taking away your attention on purpose. Use ignoring along with praising and paying attention to shape or change your child's behavior.

When should I use ignoring as a strategy?

- Use planned ignoring for annoying but harmless behaviors. Do not use planned ignoring for behavior that is harmful like hitting or biting.
- Ignore minor misbehavior by taking away your attention. Remember that paying attention to misbehavior can accidentally reward your child and can encourage him to misbehave again.
- To ignore, you should act as if he is not there. Do not look at or talk to him. Do not laugh at him if he is being cute or funny. These actions are considered accidental rewards.
- You might have to leave the room. It also helps sometimes if you pick something up like a magazine and start looking at it.
- You can practice ignoring during "special play time" sessions with your child when minor misbehavior occurs.
- It is important to try to remain calm. Provide positive attention as soon as your child stops the undesirable behavior and behaves appropriately.

Often when you start ignoring, undesired behavior will increase before it decreases. Be aware that you will be tested from time to time to see if the behavior remains undesirable. Be prepared to ignore it again.

Ignoring is the simplest strategy to deal with behavior problems, but in practice, it is one of the most difficult to carry out. To ignore means that you have to have good control, patience, and faith that things will get better. Try to avoid yelling at or correcting your child. If you feel you are about to raise your voice or you cannot walk away, try cooling off by counting to 10 or singing a song in your head. It may help to have another parent or caregiver watch you use planned ignoring and tell you how it went.

You do not want to ignore your child's behavior if it becomes harmful to himself or others. Respond to harmful behavior and help your child calm down with a time out. If dangerous behavior continues, you may need to consult with your pediatrician.



Tips to Remember:

- Use ignoring when your child is showing annoying but harmless behaviors that occur often.
- Planned ignoring takes patience. Remain calm and provide positive attention as soon the undesirable behavior stops.
- Accidental rewards given because of bad behavior usually make it worse.
- Use time out when behavior becomes harmful or your child needs to calm down.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

By Erin Carroll, MS
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Using Rewards to Improve Behavior

What is the concern?

Children often do not do the simple day-to-day tasks that they are asked to do. As a result, family life may become difficult or disrupted. Often when children do what parents ask, parents leave them alone. But good behavior can fade away if it never gets any attention or a reward. Parents can use rewards to help children increase desired behaviors and decrease unwanted behaviors.

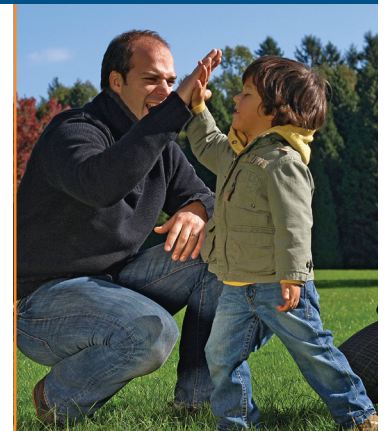
What is a reward system?

Rewards are not bribes. Parents give rewards for desired behavior when children follow rules or directions and when they show improved behavior. The parent, not the child, sets up rewards. Rewards can be used to increase a positive behavior or decrease a negative one.

What kind of rewards can I use?

- **Social rewards** are rewards of someone’s time and attention. A parent’s attention can be the most rewarding for a child. Show attention with physical rewards such as hugs and kisses, as well as verbal rewards such as praise. Use activity rewards like playing a game, telling a story, or going on a bike ride together. All of these rewards cost a small amount of time and attention, yet help keep up desired behavior over time.
- **Symbolic rewards** are rewards that can be “banked” – like stickers on a chart, poker chips, or pennies in a jar. The child earns one for good behavior. Then, as your child earns more, he “buys” a reward activity later. For example, staying up 15 minutes past bedtime might cost 15 stickers or an extra half hour playing a favorite game might cost 10 stickers. Praise your child for good behavior whenever awarding one of these stickers or pennies.
- **Tangible rewards** are rewards of things like treats, toys, or money. Be sure to combine social praise with these types of rewards. It’s best to use these when you start teaching your child something new or difficult. Have your child choose the rewards that will be earned. Remember that the rewards do not need to be big or costly to work. Money is the least effective reward for many children.

Many small rewards work better than one big reward. Your child will be more successful if given the chance to earn small rewards everyday. As you start, reward a desired behavior every time it occurs. Then, over time, give the rewards less often.



Tips to Remember:

- Pay attention to good behaviors.
- Involve your child by having him help choose rewards and by decorating sticker charts or penny jars.
- Start by rewarding desired behavior every time it happens.
- Be sure to praise your child when you reward her for good behavior.
- Over time, as behavior improves, you can give rewards less often.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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Giving Clear Directions

What is the concern?

Children often forget or simply don't follow directions they are given. Sometimes children ignore directions from parents and at times they argue and get angry.

How can I help my child follow directions?

Children often copy the actions they see in adults around them. Show your child the behaviors you want to see through your own actions. Think about how you give directions too. Sometimes children just don't understand exactly what they're supposed to do or the directions get lost within a lot of conversation.

How can I help my child listen?

- Try to give directions only when you'll be able to make sure your child follows them. If you're too busy to follow through, it might be better to wait until another time.
- Reduce distractions. For example, turn off the television or radio.
- Get closer. Position yourself about 5 to 7 feet in front of your child.
- Make eye contact and say your child's name.
- Be calm and matter of fact.
- Give your command or directions simply and politely. Use positive commands. For example, say "Be quiet, please" rather than "Stop yelling."
- If your child doesn't begin to follow the direction within about 10 seconds, calmly repeat the direction with one warning. For example, "If you don't pick up your toys, they will be put away."
- As soon as possible, praise your child for following your direction.

Replace confusion with clarity.

1) Give one direction or command at a time.

Instead of "Please get dressed, brush your teeth, brush your hair, and go to the kitchen for breakfast," give one direction at a time and praise your child for each direction that is followed.

2) Use clear action words.

Avoid vague or unclear directions—children may be unsure of what to do in the situation. Use "Sit here quietly and wait, please" instead of "Be good."

3) Break complicated tasks into several, separate directions.

Although you may know exactly what you mean by "Clean your room," a child's understanding may be less clear. Tell your children exactly what you need them to do, one step at a time. For example, the tasks involved in cleaning their rooms may include "Make your bed," "Pick up your toys," and "Put your laundry away."

4) Say what you want your child to do rather than ask for the behavior.

Avoid stating directions as questions. Say "Come to the table to eat." instead of "Would you like to come to dinner?"

5) Make your directions the last thing you say.

Many parents feel the need to explain things, but often times children only remember the last thing said. Instead of saying "Get your jacket on, we need to go to the store to get a birthday present for Matthew," say "John, we need to get a birthday present for Matthew, please get your jacket on and get in the car."



Tips to Remember:

- Be a good example. Show your child the behaviors you want to see through your own actions.
- Make sure you have your child's full attention by getting close, making eye contact, and reducing distractions.
- Replace vague instructions with specific instructions, using clear action words.
- Praise your child for following directions, even simple ones.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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Fighting and Aggression

What is the concern?

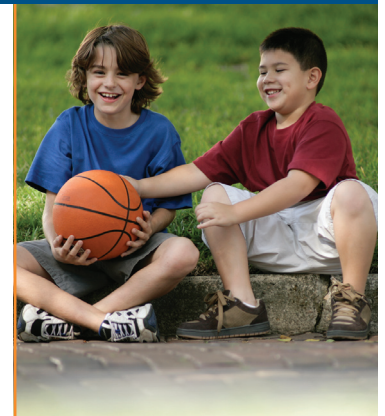
Children often fight and are aggressive. Different from the rough and tumble play that arises during pre-school years as part of pretend play, aggression involves the intent to hurt someone else. Parents can teach children safe and kind ways of solving problems and sharing without aggression.

Why do children fight or behave aggressively?

- Children can feel frustrated and angry when things do not go their way. This anger and frustration turns into aggression when they have not learned ways to control these emotions.
- They may also fight out of jealousy, competition, or retaliation, especially with brothers or sisters, or friends in their school or day care.
- Others may be aggressive to get what they want—a toy, attention, or their chance to watch TV.
- Often children fight from watching others fight. If they see parents or older children arguing or fighting or observe acts of aggression on TV or in video games, they will probably learn to do the same thing.
- Children need to learn boundaries for themselves and others. Sometimes children may become agitated or aggressive if they feel someone invaded their space.

How can I prevent aggression and fighting in children?

- Parents need to be very clear and consistent on where to draw the line between rough and tumble play and aggression. If children do not know what the rules are, they will get rougher and hurt each other.
- Explain the rules of play with clear directions. Decide on two or three very simple, clear rules for playing. For example:
 - a. Be gentle. *Show* your child how to play gently.
 - b. Share and take turns.
 - c. Keep your hands and feet to yourself.
 - d. Use a quiet, indoor voice.
 - e. Be sure to tell your child what *to* do instead of what *not* to do.
- Teach taking turns. Use activities to promote sharing and taking turns such as outdoor games and simple board games. Play games with your child to show her how to take turns.
- Encourage the behavior you want to see. When your child is playing well, sharing, and getting along, this is the time to give her positive attention. Talk about what she is doing. “I like the way you two are putting that together and playing so nicely.”
- Use rewards. You may also want to give children a special reward if they have been consistent in playing together nicely.



Tips to Remember:

- Remind children of the rules every time they play with others.
- Praise and pay attention to children for playing nicely with each other.
- Help children solve problems before fights occur.
- Tell children what to do – the behaviors you would like to see.
- Children should not observe fighting in the home or on TV or video games.

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- Help your child solve problems. Step in and help solve problems before the fighting starts. Instruct children to start taking turns if there is an argument over a toy. Praise your child for politely saying what she wants. Ask children to tell you what the problems are, what each child wants, and then suggest how to do something that is fair to everyone. For example, “Okay, everyone wants to play with the new truck. First Sheila takes it, then Tyrone. To be fair, everyone should have a turn.”
- Be aware of when your child is hungry or tired, as he may not be able to function as well. Offer a suggestion or distraction if you notice his behavior is escalating or becoming aggressive.

What should I do if my child is fighting or being aggressive?

- Again, be clear about your directions and, if necessary, send children to other areas away from each other. “Shakira, you go play over there with your toys, and Madison stay here.”
- Apply sensible consequences. If your child does not do as you have asked, use a sensible consequence that fits the situation. So, if your child has been fighting over the TV, it gets turned off for 30 minutes. If she fights over a toy, it gets put up for 15 minutes. Usually 10-15 minutes of missing an activity is enough. Give the toy or activity back after 15 minutes as long as she is not crying or fussing for the toy or activity. Return the toy or activity once the crying stops. If the problem occurs again, take away the toy or activity again but for a longer time (one hour).
- Use a brief quiet time. This involves giving the child no attention and having him sit at the edge of an activity for a short time. He must sit quietly for at least two minutes before he can come out of quiet time. If he will not sit for quiet time, then he must go to a time out. Time out involves taking your child away from a situation to a safe but boring place; he must be quiet for two minutes before he comes out of time out.
- When children hit or bite or do anything that is physically aggressive, they should be removed from the situation and must go to time out right away. While the child is in time out, turn your attention to the victim. Offer that child sympathy. After time out, the child who was aggressive must apologize to the other child. If she refuses to apologize, then she should be sent back to time out.

Tips to Remember (cont'd):

- Teach kids to share—use sensible consequences when they will not share.
- Do not ignore aggressive behavior, act immediately.
- Be consistent with your discipline and exercise quiet time or time out as necessary.
- When time out is over, return child to activity to play cooperatively.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

Discipline When Children Don't Listen

What is the concern?

Children sometimes do not do what we ask of them. Younger children are often just testing limits, and a parent saying STOP can be like a dare—they will try again. Children who are a little older learn that being defiant sometimes gets them what they want.

Parents sometimes accidentally reward children by giving them more attention for *not* doing what they are told than for doing what they were told to do. This attention may be talking, nagging, or arguing. Sometimes parents are not consistent in dealing with a child's defiance. They may threaten, ignore, or punish. Due to frustration or a lack of time, parents may give in to their child. This can teach children that they do not always have to do what they are told. Finally, directions and instructions are not always clear to children.

How can I help my child cooperate with directions and prevent problems?

Parents can help their children learn limits that they need for their own safety as well as getting along with other people.

- Give clear directions.
 - » Get close, get her attention, make eye contact, and say her name.
 - » Use a calm, firm voice.
 - » Tell your child exactly what to do and be specific.
 - » Allow your child some time to cooperate. Usually if a child will follow directions, she will start to move within 10 seconds of your command.
- Have plenty of age appropriate toys and activities available for your child to keep him occupied. Make sure to give positive attention when your child is playing well.
- Create a special playtime for you and your child. Break the cycle of nagging and arguing by catching your child “being good” during special, one-on-one time.
- Praise your child for doing things when she is told to do them. Praise is one of the easiest ways to reinforce desirable behavior.
- Reward positive behavior every time it happens. Involve your child by having him help choose rewards and by decorating sticker charts or penny jars.
- Ignore annoying but harmless behaviors that occur often. To ignore, do not look at or talk to him. You should act as if he is not there. You might have to leave the room. It also helps sometimes if you pick something up (like a magazine) and start looking at it. Be sure to give your child attention as soon as the negative behavior stops.
- Offer quiet time prior to the point of needing to discipline. Say things like, “I see you are becoming upset and that is okay but throwing things is not okay. Maybe you can use some quiet time.”



Tips to Remember:

- Prevent problems by paying attention to good behaviors. Positive attention at the right time helps later.
- Be clear and simple in your directions.
- Praise your child for doing things when she is told.
- Use consistent consequences if your child refuses to do what she is told.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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What should I do if my child doesn't do what she is told?

- Repeat your direction ONCE and start with an IF / THEN statement that includes a consequence. “IF you do not clean up the toys, THEN you will have a time out.” Follow through on your statement. In this way your child learns that you mean what you say.
- Apply sensible consequences.
 - » **Loss of Privilege** – After misbehavior, remove the activity or object that is logically tied to that misbehavior. For example, if toys are left out in the family room and your child is expected to clean up after playing, he will not be allowed to play with the toys for a specified period of time. Sensible consequences work best when they are brief (5 to 30 minutes).
 - » **Positive Practice** – Have your child practice the correct way of behaving when misbehavior occurs. This type of punishment educates as well as disciplines. It teaches the child the correct behavior and punishes the misbehavior. For instance, if your child runs down the aisle at the store, he must walk slowly down the aisle three times.
 - » **Time Out** – Remove your child from enjoyable activities when she needs to calm down, does something dangerous, or breaks a known rule. For example, if your child is aggressive or clearly breaks an established rule, she should go to time out immediately with a brief explanation. “You hit your sister, so you have to go to time out.” Just like ignoring, it is important that you do not look at or talk to your child while they are in time out. Time out should be brief, 5 minutes or less. When time out is over, repeat the direction. If she refuses again, then put her back in time out. Repeat this until she does what she is told.

Bedtime Problems

What is the concern?

Sometimes young children have problems sleeping. They may delay or refuse to go to bed. They may cry after being put to bed, get out of bed, or refuse to sleep in their own bed. They may also wake up in the middle of the night and go to their parents' bed.

Why do problems at bedtime happen?

Parents usually feed and rock their young babies to sleep. However, as babies get older they may rely on being held and rocked to go to sleep at bedtime or when they wake up in the middle of the night. It is important for children to learn to fall asleep independently, without rocking, feeding, or parents' attention.

Sometimes parents encourage poor sleep habits by accident. For example, if you put your child to bed and he cries when you try to leave, you might go back to your child's room and lay down with him or take him to your bed. The child then learns that crying gets him attention and comfort from his parents and he will not learn to sleep on his own.

Problems at bedtime also occur if there is a change in the normal routine, for example, if your child becomes sick and you let him sleep in your bed for a few nights. These problems usually correct themselves when the normal routine returns. Sometimes children change their preferences and interests and something that may have brought comfort, like a stuffed animal or blanket, becomes undesirable to the child.

How can I prevent my child from having problems at bedtime?

Make sure your child's room is a comfortable temperature, is well-ventilated, and has a night-light. It is fine for your child to have something to help soothe himself such as one favorite stuffed animal or blanket to cuddle with at bedtime. Playing lullabies or classical music can be soothing and helpful too. Have a regular bedtime that is reasonable for your child's age.

Set up a routine for your child, for example:

- Have her go to the bathroom, wash her face and hands, and brush her teeth.
- Read a book with your child.
- Make sure he has had a drink, has a night-light or anything else needed. A child should not be given a drink in a bottle or cup to have while in bed.
- Encourage your child to be quiet and stay in bed. Tell him to relax, rest, and get some sleep.
- Say good night.

Prepare this routine ahead of time. Let your child know about 30 minutes ahead of time he will be going to bed soon. Have quiet activities during this last half hour—no active play, television, or video games.

When your child goes to bed, make sure every step is done. Say:

- Did you brush your teeth?
- Did you say good night to everyone?
- Did you have a drink?
- Did you use the toilet?
- Now you are ready for sleep.



Tips to Remember:

- Keep a consistent bedtime routine.
- Praise and reward your child for staying in bed.
- Have quiet activity before bedtime, no TV or active play; it delays start of sleep.
- Use a sleep diary to chart successes and difficulties.
- Be patient--you may have to try over and over again before these routines take effect.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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Say good night, such as with a hug and kiss, and leave. In the morning, praise your child for staying in bed.

How do I teach my child to stay in bed?

Explain what will happen: “You will go to bed, and if you stay there and are quiet, I will come back to check on you in a couple of minutes.” Ignore any complaints and leave.

After 2 minutes, if your child is quiet, return and praise her: “You are doing a good job staying in bed and you are quiet. I will come back again.” Then go back in 3-4 minutes. Repeat again after 5 minutes. Continue checking every 5 minutes until the child is asleep. By doing this, the child is learning how to go to sleep on her own without you in the room.

What if my child will not stay quiet or will not stay in bed?

Use a slow but sure approach, which is probably easier with younger toddlers.

Tell your child that you will check on him a couple of times. Explain what will happen: “If you stay in your bed all night, you will earn a reward in the morning.” Tell him what the reward will be.

If your child cries, do not respond right away. Wait at least three minutes, go in and remind your child it is time to go to sleep. Your goal here is to comfort the child, not to stay until he falls asleep.

After one minute leave the room, even if he is still crying. Go back in 3 minutes, then wait 5, 7, and up to 11 minutes between going to your child and being away from the room. Keep to the time schedule and use a digital clock. Only stay **one minute** each time you go in to the child’s room.

Use a sleep diary or chart to keep track of difficulties and successes. This diary will help you determine things that make the routine harder or easier.

If your child gets out of bed:

Return your child immediately to bed. Stay calm. If she comes out again, return your child to bed and close the bedroom door. Open the door when she has been quiet for two minutes. Repeat this every time your child comes out of her room. Return your child, close the door, and open it when she has been quiet for two minutes. Calmly closing the door works much better than threatening or spanking.

If your child comes to your bed:

Return your child to his bed, stay in the room no more than a minute. If it happens again, return your child again and then close your bedroom door. Be patient—you may have to try this over and over before it works. Most problems can be avoided by having clear routines and very predictable responses when children leave their room.

Make “Daddy Time” For Your Child

What are the concerns?

Children who grow up with an active father in their lives experience many positive outcomes. These children may perform better in school, have higher self-esteem, and stronger cognitive and motor skills. They may also be less likely to become involved in risky behaviors.

What is father involvement?

Involved fathers actively participate in their children’s lives in a number of ways. Each day, fathers can be involved with their children by caring for, teaching, and playing with them. Fathers can also bond with their children through various activities, like reading to them, taking them on outings, helping them with homework, and so much more! Above all else, involved fathers make an effort to be present in order to provide their children with the love, nurturing, and positive examples that all kids deserve.

Why is it important to be an involved father?

Fathers can play an important role in promoting children’s development, happiness, and well-being. Children who grow up with involved fathers tend to have stronger cognitive and motor skills, as well as better physical and mental health. These children also appear to perform better in school, have higher self-esteem, and display less disruptive behavior. Children with involved fathers also tend to display lower rates of substance use and legal problems, along with a lower likelihood of experiencing abuse and neglect. With that said, involved fathers are like shields that protect children from a wide range of problems to foster their healthy development.

How can fathers be engaged in their children’s lives?

In addition to providing daily care, play is an important way for fathers to become actively involved with their children. Play creates opportunities for positive interactions between parents and children, which can help form and strengthen healthy bonds. However, it is important to remember that the quality of time that parents spend with children is often far more important than the quantity of time spent together. To make the most of play time, fathers should make an effort to be enthusiastic, engaging, and attentive.

Here are just a few ways fathers can become actively involved in their children’s lives:

Preschool-Age Children

- Go for a walk with your child and collect treasures (leaves, stones, feathers, etc.).
- Set aside time every day for “daddy time” with your child. During this time, give them your complete attention, and do not let anything interrupt your special time together.
- Play with your child often. Be sure to get on their level; squat, kneel, or lay on the floor.
- Read a book together or tell your child a bedtime story. Make the stories animated by using different voices, facial expressions, and sound effects.
- Go on weekly one-on-one outings. For a day of fun, go to the zoo, take your child to the movies, visit a children’s science museum, or head to the park.

**Don’t be the dad on the bleachers.
Be the dad who’s in the game!**



Tips to Remember:

- An involved father makes an effort to be present in order to provide their children with love, nurturing, and positive examples.
- Children who grow up with involved fathers tend to have stronger cognitive and motor skills, as well as better physical and mental health.
- Play creates opportunities for positive interactions between parents and children, which can help form and strengthen healthy bonds.
- Make the most of play time. Fathers should make an effort to be enthusiastic, engaging, and attentive.

Elementary-Age Children

- Ask your child, “What would you like to do together?”, and then do it.
- Attend their sporting events. Be their #1 fan and encourage them to have fun.
- Find a new skill your child wants to learn (riding a bike or catching a ball) and teach them how to do it.
- Get “hands on” with your child’s education — help with homework, practice sports or other activities, and attend school meetings and events.
- Make a healthy meal together, eat it together, and enjoy your masterpiece.
- Work in the yard or do household chores together.

Being an involved father benefits children in so many ways.

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The ABC's of Charting Behavior

What is the concern?

Sometimes it feels like no matter what you do, some of your child's challenging behaviors are hard to change. Due to busy schedules and feelings of frustration, many parents are unsure how often and under what circumstances their child's behaviors even happen. Some parents feel at a loss about how to understand and manage their child's behavior.

Why should I chart my child's behavior?

When simpler solutions don't seem to be working, charting makes you more aware of what leads to your child's behavior. It can help you figure out whether a behavior is positive or negative, how often it actually happens, and gives you clues about how to change it.

How do I chart my child's behavior?

Use "Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence" or an ABC chart to record behavior. This involves writing down what triggered the behavior (what happened just before the behavior occurred - known as the Antecedent), the actual Behavior, and what happened afterward as a result (the Consequence). For example:

- **Antecedent** – A child was told to do homework.
- **Behavior** – He said no and left the room.
- **Consequence*** – He watched TV.

*The term "consequence" can be tricky because we often think of it to mean punishment. In this case, consequence simply means the result of the behavior.

Think about charting both behaviors you want to increase – like playing nicely – and decrease – like fighting. Overall, a child's behavior changes much faster when you work on decreasing one behavior, "Stop fighting with your sister," while increasing another desired behavior, "Play nicely with your sister."

For each behavior you should record how often it happens, the intensity (low to high), and how long it went on.

Once you have about 10 incidents recorded, you may see patterns about what is causing your child's behavior. You'll have a better idea of what sets it off and what type of consequences keep it going; for example, if a child's hitting behavior leads to more one-on-one attention from adults.

Tips for Charting

- Involve each caregiver in counting and recording the behavior. Each may record at different times of the day.
- If the behavior occurs often, you can get a good idea of its overall pattern by recording just one to two hours per day.
- If the behavior occurs less often, you may have to keep track all day. If there are specific situations where the behavior occurs, then you might only have to record at those times, such as at dinner time or when you are on the phone.



Tips to Remember:

- Charting helps determine how often behaviors occur.
- Use ABC to keep track of behaviors:
 - **A-Antecedent** – What triggered the behavior?
 - **B-Behavior** – What was the behavior, how long did it last, and how intense was it?
 - **C-Consequence** – What happened just after?
- Explain to your child why you're charting and keep the chart in a visible place.
- If you need help planning your next steps, please talk with your child's health care provider for more ideas.

By Erin Carroll, MS
Doug Tynan, PhD
Lynn Chaiken, MSW

- ALWAYS explain why you are charting to your child. For example, “I want us to have fewer problems at home. One of the problems we want to work on is having you and your sister fight less often with each other. So we’re going to first count how often you fight with each other AND how often you play nicely together.”
- Keep the chart in a very visible place, like taped to the refrigerator door. This will remind your child what you are charting and remind you to count the behaviors.

Sample ABC Chart

Antecedent (what happened just before? What time of day? Where?)	Behavior	How long did it last?	How intense? (Low to high)	Consequence (what happened just after?)
<i>4:30 before dinner I told Sheila to clean up her toys.</i>	<i>She threw her toys at her sister.</i>	<i>15 seconds</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>I yelled at her and picked up the toys.</i>



Family Meals

What is the concern?

Busy work schedules, after-school activities and other commitments often lead parents and children to eat at separate times and in separate places. When families don't eat meals together, they miss out on important opportunities to spend time together, make healthy food choices, learn about each others' lives, and enjoy one another's company.

What are the benefits of family meals?

- When parents and children enjoy meals together, they are able to talk about their day and discuss things that are worrying them, which often makes everyone feel closer.
- Eating together gives parents the chance to teach children healthy eating habits by demonstrating and encouraging appropriate food choices and portion sizes.
- Children who regularly eat family meals tend to eat more fruits and vegetables and less junk food than those who rarely eat with their parents. These children are less likely to become overweight or obese.
- Children who regularly eat family meals are less likely to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking or using drugs and alcohol.
- For teens, eating as a family can lead to better communication and help them to feel more able to confide in their parents.

How do you encourage family meals?

1. Plan ahead.

- Meal Times: Try to engage in as many family meals as you can each week. Depending upon your family's schedule, it may be necessary to eat earlier or later on some days. At times when it is challenging to schedule a family dinner, consider sitting down together for another meal, such as a weekend lunch, or even a midday snack.
- Menus: Remember that the food served to your family does not have to be complicated. Simple dishes like scrambled eggs, soup, and sandwiches can be prepared quickly and can be healthy and delicious. Also, try to keep your pantry stocked with frequently used grocery items for simple, healthy meals that your family enjoys.

2. Let everyone help.

- Allow children to participate in planning, preparing, or cooking the meals. Even young children can help with simple tasks, such as setting the table, washing vegetables, measuring or tossing a salad. When kids are involved in planning and preparing meals, they may be more likely to make healthy choices and try new foods.
- Serve the meal family style, in which dishes are placed on the table and everyone serves themselves. This will encourage children to pay attention to hunger and fullness cues. It also provides opportunities to teach communication skills and manners.

3. Set the stage.

A family meal is ideally eaten at a table. All televisions, phones and hand-held electronic devices are turned off. Parents and children alike should not talk on the phone, text or read e-mails during a family meal.

4. Create a positive atmosphere.

All family members should wait to begin eating until everyone is ready and seated at the table. Family members can take turns talking about their day and perhaps sharing something interesting or positive that happened during the day.

Tips to Remember:

- Planning ahead takes some time but will save you time in the long run. Plan meal times, menus, and grocery lists ahead of time.
- Getting all family members involved in the meal will contribute to children's skill development and will help the family enjoy spending time together.
- Keeping a positive attitude about family meals will help your children keep a positive attitude.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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Eating and Mealtime Problems

What is the concern?

Mealtime is often stressful for parents of toddlers and preschoolers. Young children's appetites decrease while their interest in self-feeding increases. They start to push for independence by wanting to feed themselves, which can be very messy. They might be picky about what foods they will and will not eat. They may want the same food at every meal or eat very slowly. Some children might refuse to come to the table or to stay at the table until they are done eating. It may seem that they are not eating enough or that they do not eat a large enough variety of food.

Often these problems are short-lived and are caused by normal changes in appetite that occur at this age. Sometimes these problems arise when there are changes in the child's normal routine, such as eating earlier or later than usual, or if the child becomes sick.

Why do children have problems with eating and at mealtime?

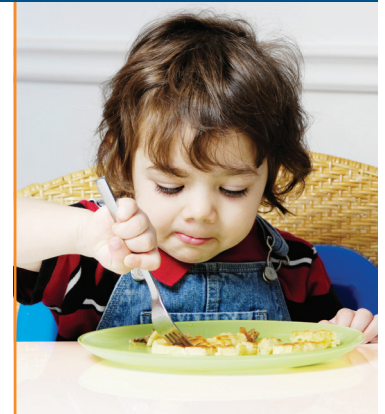
Problems at mealtime occur because the amount of food children eat changes so much over the first 3 years of life.

- By 8 months of age, children begin to show interest in feeding themselves, for example, by reaching for the spoon.
- Between 12 and 24 months, children begin to eat the same things as the rest of their family and begin to develop preferences for certain foods.
- At 18 months, toddlers often learn to feed themselves with a spoon.
- By 24 months they begin to learn more self-control and social skills around eating, like sitting still.
- At 36 months, although food preferences are developing and children are increasing the variety of foods they eat, their appetite may decrease.

All of these changes, which you want to encourage and support, occur when children are becoming more independent and wanting to do things "all by myself!"

How can I prevent problems at mealtime?

- Establish a regular meal and snack schedule to be followed every day to help ensure that your child will be hungry at mealtime.
- Avoid snacks and heavy drinks before mealtime.
- Set time limits on the length of the meal – 20 minutes is typically enough time for a toddler to finish a meal.
- Have meals as a family – have your child eat at the table.
- Turn the TV off during mealtimes.
- Establish a routine for meals and snacks:
 - » Tell your child the meal will be ready in a few minutes.
 - » Set your child's place at the table.
 - » Have everything ready before seating your child at the table with you.



Tips to Remember:

- Keep consistent schedules and routines.
- Use correct portion sizes or allow your child to serve herself.
- Offer praise and attention when they show good eating behavior.
- Ignore minor misbehavior.
- Avoid using food as a reward or consequence.
- You provide food, children decide what and how much to eat.
- Increase variety of foods – try and try again.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

By Doug Tynan, PhD
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- » Place your child in appropriate seating, such as a booster seat if needed.
- » Throughout the meal be aware of your child’s cues for when she is hungry and full.
- Provide age-appropriate portions and textures.
 - » For young toddlers, harder foods should be mashed or cut into small pieces.
 - » Toddlers and preschoolers should get a variety of nutrients by offering foods from all food groups: breads/grains, vegetables, fruits, milk/dairy, and meat/protein. See MyPyramid for Preschoolers at www.MyPyramid.gov.
 - » In general, portion sizes for fruits, vegetables, starchy vegetables, or grains should be the size of your child’s fist. Portions of meats, poultry and fish should be the size of your child’s palm.
- Do not insist on a clean plate. Avoid using food as an incentive or punishment, for example *no dessert until you eat your vegetables*.
- Explain rules at the start of the meal.
 - » The child should sit until she is excused from the table.
 - » If appropriate, the child should eat with utensils.
 - » The child should choose from what you have already prepared, not just what she requests.
- Reward good eating behavior by paying attention and praising while they are eating.
 - » Provide attention and praise for things like eating properly with a spoon, trying a new food, or staying seated through the meal.
 - » A special activity can be shared after good meals as a reward.

What should I do if my child is having trouble at mealtimes?

- Don’t react to minor behavior problems like being loud, whining, or not eating. Ignore or look away. Be patient—ignoring is difficult and does not work immediately. Your child may continue the inappropriate behavior until he realizes that the appropriate mealtime behaviors are the ones that get your attention.
- Be prepared for messy eating! Expect food to land on the floor and on your child’s face. This is a normal part of development.
- Expect that your child will eat slower at some meals.
- Provide sensible consequences for not following mealtime rules, such as the loss of privileges after a meal.
- Increase the variety of food.
 - » Introduce one food at a time.
 - » Continue offering foods that your child has previously refused. It can typically take multiple tries before a child will accept a new food. Don’t give up, try and try again.

Reading to a Child

Learning to read is a childhood milestone that parents eagerly await. Parents everywhere want to do their best to help their children prepare for reading success. Reading is a complex task. Think about all of the skills that go into learning to read:

- Recognizing and naming letters
- Understanding the way speech sounds make up words
- Focusing on printed marks (letters and words)
- Connecting speech sounds to letters
- Blending letter sounds
- Controlling eye movements across the page
- Building images and ideas
- Storing the ideas in memory

How can I help my child achieve success in reading?

- **Read to your child everyday.** Try to make it part of your routine. Many parents choose to read before bedtime, but you should choose a time that works for your family. This should be a time to connect and bond with your child. Choose books you enjoy!
- **If possible, read with one child at a time.** This will help ensure that the child can choose books that interest him and gives the child the chance to ask a lot of questions.
- **During reading time, turn off the TV and the phone.** Eliminate distractions to help your child focus and to show how important reading is.
- **Children are never too young to enjoy books.** Babies and toddlers can explore sturdy board books and practice turning pages.
- **Read expressively.** Use different voices for the various characters. Don't be afraid to act silly!
- **Let your child explore a variety of reading materials.** Age-appropriate magazines, poetry and even comic books may increase your child's interest in reading!
- **Let your child see you read.** It shows the child that you think reading is important. Children copy their parents, and they want to do what "big people" do.
- **Sing songs to your child.** Encourage your child to sing with you. Read nursery rhymes and do finger play. The Itsy Bitsy Spider, Where is Thumbkin? and The Hokey Pokey are familiar favorites that will get your child actively involved.



Tips to Remember:

1. Read to your child every day.
2. Point to words while reading.
3. Help your child recognize her name in print.
4. While looking through picture books, talk about the pictures.
5. Ask your child questions about the things you read.
6. Recite nursery rhymes.
7. Sing songs.
8. Have conversations with your child; talk about things that interest him.

Reading to a Child (continued)

- **Point out words in the environment.** For example, while driving in the car, point out names of familiar stores, restaurants, traffic signs, and billboards. Encourage your child to locate specific letters on menus, cereal boxes, junk mail, or in magazines. Name things as you see them.
- **Visit the library—this is a way to enjoy new books without spending any money.** It also allows your child to select books of interest to her. In addition, most libraries offer age-appropriate story times so that you and your child can participate together.
- **Read the same books over and over.** You may think this is boring but young children learn from and enjoy repetition. In fact, you will find that after a few readings of the same book, your child will finish sentences for you, and notice if you leave a word out.
- **With a school-age child, don't limit your book choice.** If your child wants you to read what you consider to be a difficult book, read it! Children can listen to and understand more complex text than they can read on their own.
- **As your child gets older and begins to read alone, you can take turns reading to one another.** Alternate reading pages or paragraphs. If your child doesn't know a word, tell it to him. This helps keep the flow of the reading, so your child does not lose meaning while trying to read

What are the benefits of reading aloud?

- Builds listening skills
- Increases attention span
- Fosters vocabulary growth
- Develops personal interests
- Introduces new concepts
- Builds your relationship with your child
- Encourages a love of reading

Preparing your child for future reading success is less about giant leaps and more about the simple things you can do every day – such as taking time out to read with your child. One of the easiest ways parents can help their children become better readers is to read with them every day. Reading together will help build important literacy skills and create fun experiences for you and your child. You will be teaching your child without really trying!



Tips to Remember:

1. Read to your child every day.
2. Point to words while reading.
3. Help your child recognize her name in print.
4. While looking through picture books, talk about the pictures.
5. Ask your child questions about the things you read.
6. Recite nursery rhymes.
7. Sing songs.
8. Have conversations with your child; talk about things that interest him.

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Ways To Reduce Screen Time

What are the concerns?

Each day, children spend an average of 4.5 hours in front of a screen. Besides sleeping, children spend more time watching television and playing videogames than they do in any other activity. Spending so much time in front of a screen takes children away from other important activities, such as exercising and being physically active, reading and completing homework, playing and socializing with friends, and spending quality time with family.

What is screen time?

Screen time refers to any time spent using screen media (televisions, computers, videogames, and handheld devices), excluding time used for school work. It has been recommended that children two years and older limit their screen time to no more than two hours per day.

Why is it important to reduce screen time?

Spending too much time in front of a screen may increase children's risk of becoming overweight and developing a poor body image. Excessive screen time might also place children at heightened risk for aggressive behavior, substance use, sexual activity, and poor academic performance, particularly in the area of reading. When children spend less time in front of a screen, they have more opportunity to engage in healthier activities.

How can parents reduce their children's screen time?

- Track how much time your children spend in front of screens throughout the day. This will give you a sense of whether you need to change their screen time habits and also allow you to track your progress.
- Establish a house rule limiting screen time to no more than two hours a day. When children follow this rule, praise (and occasionally reward) them, which will increase the likelihood that they continue to limit their screen time.
- Plan what you watch by creating a family television schedule each week and post it on the refrigerator so that everyone can see it.
- Set a good example by limiting your own screen time to no more than two hours. When your children see you following the house rule, they will be more likely to do the same.
- Remove screens from bedrooms. Children with televisions in their rooms spend substantially more time watching television and are also more likely to be overweight. So, take all screens out of your children's bedroom. Your children may protest, but remember that it's for their health!
- Turn off the television during meal times. Meal time is a great opportunity for family time, and having regular family meals has been linked to a number of positive outcomes in children. However, when the television is on, the quality of time spent together is likely limited.
- Do not use screens as babysitters. Provide your children with opportunities to play, learn, and help around the house. Instead of spending time in front of a screen, encourage them to read a book, go outside to play with friends, or involve them in whatever you are doing. For instance, if you are folding laundry, let your children help by matching the socks.



Tips to Remember:

- Turn off the television during mealtime.
- Do not allow your child to watch television while completing homework.
- Allow your child to choose an appropriate program to watch each day. Do not turn on the television until their show comes on.
- Declare a "screen-free" day once a week, during which no one watches television, uses the computer, or plays videogames.
- Avoid using screen time as a reward. Doing so could give too much value to screen time.
- Replace Saturday morning cartoons with a fun family activity.

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Tantrums

What is the concern?

Tantrums occur when children are frustrated or angry. They often occur when children experience:

- Being told “No”
- Being overtired or hungry
- Changes in routine
- Tasks that are hard for them
- Being unable to express their emotions
- Things not going their way
- Inability to complete a task on their own

Tantrums sometimes happen for no clear reason. Parents can help prevent tantrums and guide children in calming down. Learning to deal with disappointment and frustration and learning to calm down are important skills for children to learn from their parents.

How can I prevent my child from having tantrums?

- **Stay calm** - When you tell children “No” do it simply and calmly.
- **Keep an eye on the clock** – A child who is tired, hungry, or thirsty is more likely to get upset over something small. A missed meal or nap can cause a tantrum.
- **Routines** – As much as possible, keep a routine or schedule. If you have to change something, let your child know ahead of time and use visual reminders about the changes—such as a calendar with pictures—as much as possible.
- **Be clear and brief in giving directions** – If a child is having a hard time doing a requested task, break it down into easy steps. For example, if it is time to clean up and put toys away, tell her specifically what to do: “Pick up the red car and put it in the blue box, thank you.” Make sure to praise if she follows the steps; she will be more likely to continue to follow directions.
- **One-on-one time** – Make sure you spend some one-on-one playtime with your child.
- **Redirect** – Redirection, or moving a child’s attention to something else, can go a long way to preventing an outburst. “No, you can’t have that right now, let’s do this instead.”
- **Independent play** – Find activities that your child can do by herself so she can practice doing something independently. Be sure to commend her for trying.

What should I do if my child is having a tantrum?

Once a child starts crying, becoming angry or throwing himself on the floor, *selective attention* and *selective ignoring* can help him calm down as long as he is safe and unable to harm himself.

- **Selective attention** – Wait for your child to have a quiet moment in the middle of the outburst. You can then talk to her, tell her what a good job she is doing at being calm. Do not worry if she starts to cry again; wait for another teachable moment.
- **Selective ignoring** – During the tantrum, ignore, turn your head, and look the other way. Wait for a few seconds of quiet before you speak. If your child hangs on to you, gently take his hands off of you and continue to ignore him.



Tips to Remember:

- Keep consistent schedules and routines. Share any changes in the schedule or routine ahead of time.
- Have one-on-one play time every day.
- Keep an eye on the clock for meal and nap times.
- Practice selective attention and selective ignoring if your child is having a tantrum.
- Teach how to label and express feelings.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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- **Stay calm** – No matter how upset your child becomes, you need to remain calm as a way to show appropriate behavior and to keep from making the tantrum worse.
- **When it's over** – After your child is calm, let her know that she was angry or upset. This labels the feelings and helps her learn how to express herself the next time. Suggest something else she can do in the future if she starts to get upset again: “When you feel upset, you can take a walk with me outside, count to three, or say the alphabet.” It is important to comfort your child because she feels out of control during a tantrum.

Time and Predictable Schedules

What is the concern?

Children don't worry about being on time, rarely look at the clock, and frequently feel rushed, mainly because they don't develop a good sense of time until they're about age 10. Some children may really struggle with time and with making transitions from one activity to the next without predictable schedules.

Adults may easily understand the meaning of "a couple of minutes," "a few days," or "next weekend," but the concept of time is often difficult for many children. When children don't know about time or don't have a good understanding of what's coming next, a missed meal, a missed nap, or abrupt changes in activities can lead to irritability, tantrums, or other problem behaviors.

How can I use predictable schedules to prevent my child's problem behaviors?

Routines and schedules help children to feel safe and to learn how to organize their time as they grow up. Help organize children's activities with sensible routines, including:

- **Waking up** – Try to maintain the same wake up time, or close to it, each day. We all like to sleep in on weekends, but young children usually wake up early. Someone needs to get up with your child, prepare breakfast, and set her up to play quietly on weekends to keep her schedule consistent. Throughout the week, make sure your child gets up at the same time, even if the schedule is a little different.
- **Meals** – Have meals on a schedule. Eat with your child at a scheduled mealtime at about the same time each day. This reduces behavior problems overall, improves what your child eats, and promotes healthy weight as she grows older.
- **Routine care** – Have your child get dressed, take a bath, and do other routine care on schedule. On weekends, once up and fed, your child should get dressed at the same time as she does during the week. If your child takes a bath or shower every night, also try to do that around the usual weekday time. This will help to avoid arguments and stalling around these activities.
- **Bedtime** – Keep bedtime routines consistent. Have your child get ready for bed at the same time every night. Make sure that baths, brushing teeth, getting a drink, reading, using the toilet, and lights out or quiet time are at around the same time. Do these tasks in the same order every night to help your child learn the routine and fall asleep more easily. Once your child is in bed, keep the house quiet for the next half hour.
- **Using a calendar** – Children understand and remember pictures better than spoken words. Get a calendar on which you can draw or put pictures of events for the coming week. Include things that don't happen every day, such as sports practices, birthday parties, and school events. Each week go over the events that will happen that week. If your child asks a lot of questions about when something will happen, show your child the calendar, and let her count the days. Use the calendar to answer "when" questions. This will help your child plan and also organize time as she gets older.



Tips to Remember:

- Times for wake up, meals, baths, and bedtime should all be on schedule.
- Try to stick to the same schedule on weekends.
- Use a picture calendar to organize events; your child will remember it better.
- If you stick to a routine, you'll have fewer arguments over meals, bedtimes, and routines.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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TV Time for Young Children (Birth to 5 Years)



What is the concern?

Over 90% of children begin watching TV regularly before the age of two and 30% of preschoolers have TVs in their bedrooms. Many parents believe that watching educational programs will make their young children smarter. However, too much TV viewing in very young children has been linked to overweight and obesity, as well as problems with language development, attention span, and academic achievement. The more children watch TV, the greater the negative effects they experience.

How much TV should my child watch?

Children under the age of two should not watch any TV or videos, even programs specially advertised for very young children. Babies and toddlers learn by being active and exploring their environment. Watching TV, on the other hand, is a passive activity that does not help young children grow and learn.

From ages two to five years, children should watch less than 1 or 2 hours of TV a day. The shows they watch should be age-appropriate, educational and non-violent. Moreover, when children watch educational shows, they may be more likely to learn when parents watch with them, review ideas, and ask questions about the program.

How can I reduce the amount of TV my young child watches?

As a parent, you have the power to limit how much TV your child watches and what shows he watches. Here are some tips for doing so:

- Set clear limits for how much time your child can spend watching TV each day.
- Use a clock or stopwatch to keep track of the amount of time your child spends watching TV. This will help you learn how much TV your child actually watches and track your progress when you begin to reduce TV time.
- Set a kitchen timer to go off and make noise when the time limit is up. A timer provides children with a visual reminder of how much time is left, and the noise it makes offers an additional cue that TV time is over.
- Reducing TV time may cause your child may become angry at first. Staying firm and not giving in is the best way to help your child accept the new rules for TV time.
- Help your child make a list of fun activities to do when the TV is off. Include physical activities (tummy time, climbing, riding wheel toys), as well as quieter activities (reading, drawing, puzzles, playing dress-up). Be sure to include activities that your child can do alone and some that you can do together.

- Don't use the TV as a distraction or baby-sitter. If you are busy around the house, involve your child by assigning her small tasks (sorting socks, dusting non-breakable items, setting the table). You can also encourage your child to choose an activity that he can safely do alone.
- Turn the TV off at meal time and at least 30 minutes before your child's bedtime. This will help you connect with your child during special times of the day. It can also help your child listen to her bodily cues.
- Do not keep the TV on all the time. Some adults use the TV as background noise as they go about their day. However, this sets a bad example for children and increases their risk for exposure to mature new stories, violent shows, and unnecessary advertisements.
- Remove TVs from your child's bedroom. Watching TV interferes with sleep and contributes to obesity.
- Watch TV with your child. This will help you monitor the shows that your child watches as well as the total time spent watching TV. In choosing programs, be aware that some cartoon shows are not appropriate for children of any age.
- Do not use TV as a reward or punishment. This gives TV too much value.

Tips to Remember

- Children under 2 years of age should not watch any TV or videos.
- Children ages 2 to 5 years should watch less than 1 to 2 hours of TV each day.
- Monitor how much TV your child watches and decide whether you should work to reduce his TV time.
- Make sure that the programs your child watches are educational and non-violent.
- Remove TVs from children's bedrooms.
- Be sure your child enjoys a variety of activities each day besides TV.
- Instead of TV, let your child help you with household activities.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more

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Time Out

What is the concern?

Sometimes children behave in ways that are disruptive, out of control, or defiant. With dangerous behaviors like hitting, biting, or pulling hair, children need adults to address these behaviors right away and to show them how to calm down.

What is time out?

Time out is a method to stop undesired or dangerous behavior by giving your child a break from rewarding, enjoyable activities and from your attention. It can be used when your child needs to calm down, when he does something wrong on purpose, or breaks a known rule. If you keep talking and interacting with a child who is supposed to be in time out, this method will not work.

- When you first start to use time out, it is helpful to try it with just a few target behaviors.
- Teach your child about time out before it is needed. You may want to practice with dolls or puppets. He should understand the purpose of time out and which behaviors result in a time out.
- Use time out in combination with special play time, specific praise, and rewards for good behavior.
- Time out works best when it is performed immediately, consistently, and not overused.

How do I use time out with my child?

- Time out should occur in a boring, but safe spot (e.g., hallway). Use a nearby chair or a step where you can watch the child. He should be away from toys, people, windows, TV, or anything he likes. Toddlers may be placed on the floor or in a playpen.
- Rather than use time out for a specified amount of time, the end of time out depends on the time it takes for him to self-calm. For toddlers, very brief time outs are highly effective, for example, 20 seconds. Time out should not last longer than a few minutes.
- When you give an instruction to your child, wait about 5 to 10 seconds to see if the child is going to follow the instruction. If your child has not begun to follow the instruction, give a warning such as, “If you do not put your toys away now, you will go to time out.”
- If your child is aggressive or clearly breaks an established rule, she should go to time out immediately with a brief explanation. “You hit your sister so you have to go to time out.”
- If he refuses to go, lead by the hand, or carry him if needed. If a toddler, carry him facing away from you or look away so that there is no confusion between a hug and a trip to time out.
- Simply and calmly state the rule that was broken or the reason for the time out. Say, “Because you played with the stove, you have to take a time out.”



Tips to Remember:

- Use time out when your child needs to calm down or does something wrong on purpose.
- Teach your child about time out before you use it.
- Time out works best when consistent and not overused.
- You use time out in combination with special play time, specific praise, and rewards for good behavior.
- If these suggestions do not work, please talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

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- Tell him to sit down on the chair. He is not to talk to anyone or to play with anything while in time out. Do not interact with your child when he is in time out; refrain from talking, lecturing, or scolding.
- The first few times you use time out, your child may scream, cry, kick, or look for something to throw. As long as the child remains seated, ignore the tantrum by turning away, engaging in a task, or playing with other children.
- Do not let your child leave time out before you have told him to do so. If he gets up or leaves time out before it is over, immediately return him to the chair without talking. You may have to repeat this procedure several times. He will soon learn that you will always put him back in the chair and therefore, he will eventually stay seated.
- After your child has calmed down, tell him that he can get up. If he is crying in time out, he needs to be quiet for the last 20 seconds before he can come out.
- After time out, redirect your child to an acceptable activity. If he refused a direction, give the direction again. Say, “You’re calm. Time-in. Please put the blocks in the box.” Be sure to praise your child for compliance with your instruction.
- If he refuses to listen, then put him back in time out. Repeat this until he does what he is told.
- Immediately after time out, make sure the child engages in high quality activities with you. A clear contrast between time out and special play time with you increases the effectiveness of time outs.

Cautions

- Bedrooms should not be used for time out. There are usually too many interesting things in children’s bedrooms and parents may not be able to observe when the child has calmed down if they are not in sight. Also, some parents have been known to forget that their child was in time out!
- Children should never be in time out so long that they fall asleep. This does not teach them self-calming skills.
- Parents, not children, are in charge of deciding when they are calm or when time out is over. When children say they are calm or time out is over, this is their attempt to control the situation.

What should I do if time out is not working?

- Make sure all adults responsible for disciplining your child are using time out consistently. You should agree with your partner about when and for what behaviors to send the child to time out.
- Continue to catch your child being good. Remember to use special play time and to let him know when he is following the rules. Signs of affection (for example, a pat on the shoulder) are an additional way to show positive attention.
- Use a chart or log book to see if this method is working.
- Even if your child tries to convince you that time out is fun and therefore not working, still persist. Over time, the difficult behaviors for which you use time out should occur less often.
- You may feel the need to “punish” your child for doing something inappropriate in the time out chair (such as cursing or spitting). However, it is very important to ignore the child when he behaves poorly in time out in order to teach him that such attention-getting strategies do not work.
- Seek additional assistance if nothing improves.