

# Discipline Tips

How you discipline your children is up to you, based on your culture, upbringing, and values. Here are some guidelines.

## For infants

Infants need to learn about themselves and the world around them. Providing a safe, secure, and loving environment will help them develop trust in you.

- Provide love, protection, and guidance.
- Distract them from things that are off limits.
- Provide a safe environment.
- Set limits in a calm and clear manner.

## For toddlers

Take a proactive approach—don't just put out fires. Instead, think about what kind of action or attitude would work best, considering the child's temperament, age, development, and your style.

- Plan ahead; back up your words with actions. You've decided ahead of time that if he doesn't stop banging after you asked once, you will take the cup away.
- Experiment! Maybe a very active child who won't sit for snack can help serve the food, sit for a short time, and then come back to the table later when he's hungry.
- Have routines and structure. When are you having the most trouble? If there is chaos in the morning, perhaps you don't have enough of a routine. Nap time rituals will often prevent nap time battles.
- Express clear expectations—say what you mean and mean what you say. "Please get dressed now. If you're not dressed you'll go to daycare in your P.J.'s."
- Make eye contact instead of calling from afar.
- Practice staying calm. A controlled emotional response will be most effective.

**Teach acceptable behavior.** You teach children with both your words and actions. It takes more time to discipline than to punish, but it's well worth it. A child will eventually learn self-discipline.

- Give alternatives. "You can't throw sand, but you can pour it from the pail or dig in it."
- Be consistent, and repeat what you expect as often as necessary. If the rules keep changing, children will test them to see where the limits are.
- Include children in problem solving when they are old enough.
- Have children repeat agreements back to you.

**Encourage!** Children want to be liked—and encouraging remarks and actions will let them know they are. Notice the efforts the children are making, and tell them they're doing a good job.

- Expect success.
- Point out positive qualities.
- Stop on a high note when teaching something new, before the child gets too frustrated.
- Get support from other adults for the very difficult and important job you are doing.