

How to Discipline Children with Love and Limits

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When parents talk about disciplining their children, sometimes they refer to punishments such as spanking, grounding a child, or yelling. What we mean by discipline is a way for parents to teach children right from wrong in a respectful and effective way. The method you use will depend on your child's age, behavior, and your experience. Children will learn how to resolve conflicts and manage their feelings by watching you, so stay calm, and think about what your child needs.

Here are some tips for respectful discipline:

- **Have clear rules and expectations.** Mean what you say and say what you mean. If it's time to leave the park, don't tell a child that you'll leave without her. Give a 5-minute warning, and then leave, even if she's upset.
- **Show that you accept a child's feelings and wishes.** "I can see that you're sad that you can't go to school with your brother. Let's think about what we'll do when he gets home."
- **Have reasonable consequences for misbehavior, and acknowledgment for respectful behavior.** If your son won't stop picking on his little sister, send him to another room to play alone. Set the timer and let him know when he can come back. When he treats her well, tell him how much you appreciate his behavior.
- **Don't expect more than your child is capable of.** Instead of getting angry with your 3-year-old for being restless at the store, ask him to help you pick out the fruits and vegetables, and count the tomatoes. Keep your shopping trips short.
- **Present a united front with your partner and other caregivers.** If your child isn't allowed to watch more than an hour of TV each day, make sure other adults agree on the rules. If your child has a tantrum when it's time to turn TV off, you may want to take away TV privileges the next day.
- **Don't give consequences when you're angry.** If your teenager talks back to you and you start to feel angry, separate from her, and wait till you calm down before you decide what the consequences will be. When angry, you're likely to over react.
- **When a child's misbehavior is on the rise, listen, look, and reflect on what may be going on.** Sometimes a child's behavior is an expression of stress, fear, or other emotions. Spend fun time with your child, and provide a safe environment with routines, love, and limits.

To learn more about setting limits and other important information and advice for parents of young children, call First 5 California at 1-800-KIDS-025 for a Kit for New Parents. For a kit in Spanish call 1-800-50-Niños.

