

## Do's & Don'ts of Discipline

All kids will test the limits of good behavior. It's their job! It's your job as a parent to help them learn which behaviors are appropriate and which are not. That's what "discipline" is about. It's not punishing your child; it's teaching your child between right and wrong, and between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Another point to remember is that it's not the severity but the consistency of discipline that works.

So...

- **Say what you mean,**
- **Mean what you say, and**
- **Do what you said you would do.**

DO	DON'T
<p><b>Be consistent.</b> The more consistent the limits are, the less your child will keep trying to test them. You'll need to enforce your rules every time, so choose your battles wisely.</p>	<p><b>Don't give in to whining.</b> Your child will try whining, crying or throwing temper tantrums to get out of the punishment. Hold strong! If you give in, it only teaches your child that whining, crying, etc., are appropriate ways to get what he wants.</p>
<p><b>Make punishments immediate.</b> If you wait to provide a reward or punishment for a certain behavior, your child may not make the connection between his actions and the consequences.</p>	<p><b>Don't argue with your child.</b> Never engage in power struggles with your children. Ignore any protests or end potential debates with a simple, "because I said so."</p>
<p><b>Stay calm.</b> Discipline is a frustrating process. It's okay for you to take a break or count to 10 while you regain your composure.</p>	<p><b>Don't raise your voice.</b> Avoid yelling and screaming, since this can teach your child that it is okay to lose control if you don't get your way.</p>
<p><b>Distinguish between your child &amp; his behavior.</b> When your child misbehaves, let him know that you still love him, but that the behavior in question is not okay.</p>	<p><b>Don't call your child names.</b> Never call your child a name or shame him. You want to help him learn appropriate behaviors without damaging his self-esteem.</p>
<p><b>Think before you speak.</b> If in the heat of the moment you blurt out, "You're grounded forever!" you may regret it. Can you live with that? Consequences have to be realistic to be effective.</p>	<p><b>Don't criticize your child.</b> Make sure your child understands that you're unhappy with his behavior, not him.</p>
<p><b>Provide a safe environment.</b> You can prevent your young explorer from getting in trouble for opening drawers and cabinets, for example, by installing safety locks on them.</p>	<p><b>Don't spank or hit your child.</b> Physical punishments only make your child more aggressive and angry. Being a good parent requires a lot of patience and self-restraint. You can do it! Count to 10, take a few moments to think, and you'll find a better solution.</p>
<p><b>Plan ahead.</b> If you always have difficulty in a certain situation or place, such as at the store, talk to your child beforehand and explain what your expectations are and what the consequences of misbehavior will be.</p>	<p><b>Don't offer false choices.</b> If your child must cooperate, why even give him the option to argue? So instead of asking "Are you ready to go to bed now?" simply say "It's time for bed."</p>