

Ten Handy Discipline Techniques

1. Positive reinforcement

Praise your child for good behavior by showing your approval with a genuine hug and a smile and explaining what he's done well. For example, "Thank you for picking up all your toys. You did a great job!"

2. Ignore it

Some behaviors are done just to get your attention. The best way to deal with these is to ignore them (if it's safe to do so). In an ideal world, your child should get attention for good behavior, not misbehavior.

3. Just say "no"

Many times you can stop inappropriate behavior with a firm "no," while looking him in the eyes. If this doesn't work, don't yell; try another technique such as redirecting your child to another activity.

4. Redirect, distract or change activity

If your child does something inappropriate, like drawing on the wall, stop him, explain that the behavior is not okay, then give him an alternative activity, like drawing on paper.

5. Calm talking

Talk calmly with your child about the behavior. Express your disapproval of his behavior (not of him) and ask your child what happened and why. (Simply acknowledging your child's feelings may help him get over the need for destructive behavior.) Then ask your child to help come up with ways to solve the problem; this helps him take responsibility for his actions.

6. Time outs

When your child throws a tantrum or gets wound up beyond control, giving him a "time out" will work wonders. First, give your child one warning. For example, "If you don't do what I ask, you will have a time out." If he chooses to misbehave, have him sit in a chair or stand in a corner by himself--doing nothing--for a few minutes. This helps him calm down enough that you can talk with him and use other methods to encourage better behavior. *Tip: Use a kitchen timer to count down your child's punishment time, which is usually one minute per year of age, and start it only after your child has quieted down.*

7. Fix it

Involve your child in remedying a situation he has caused. For example, if your child spills something on purpose, have him help clean it up. If he hurts another child, have him apologize and help soothe the other child.

8. Natural consequences

When a child sees the natural consequences of his actions, he experiences the direct results. For example, if your child throws a toy out the window, he won't be able to play with it anymore.

9. Logical consequences

Sometimes your child is not motivated by natural consequences, so you need to create a "logical" consequence. For example: If your child doesn't put away his toys, the natural consequence is that it creates a hazard to others. Your child probably won't understand or care about this, so you'll need to make up a consequence that does matter to him. Explain to him that if you have to pick the toys up, he won't be allowed to play with them again for a whole day. *IMPORTANT: With this method, you absolutely have to mean what you say and be prepared to follow through immediately. He'll protest. You'll need to be firm, remain calm, and let him experience the consequence.*

10. Withholding privileges

This works much like logical consequences do. You simply find something your child particularly enjoys and take it away as a consequence of misbehaving. It works especially well for older children, and you can use it as a back-up for times you can't think of a logical consequence on the spot.

