

Discipline in Childcare

Basic Tips Child Care Providers Can Use to Guide
Children's Behavior



Guidance

Children need adults to teach, guide, and support them as they grow and learn. Child care providers play an important role in guiding children's behavior in positive, supportive, and age-appropriate ways. The most appropriate ways to guide behavior are different at different ages, depending on their developmental abilities and needs. For example, two-year-olds have limited understanding and need a lot of redirection, but five-year-olds can learn to be good problem solvers. Effective guidance strategies also depend on the individual child's personality. Strategies that work well for one child may not be effective for another child of the same age.



Common Strategies for Guiding Children's Behavior in Child Care Settings

- Keep rules simple and easy to understand. Discuss rules with children and write them down. Consider children's suggestions for rules. Repeat the rules often. A few rules that work well with children include:
 - Help each other.
 - Take care of our toys.
 - Say please and thank you.
 - Be kind to each other.



Say what you mean.

- Use "do" instead of "don't" whenever possible. Choose your words carefully, especially when you are guiding children's behavior. Keep sentences short and simple. Focus on *what to do* rather than what not to do.
- Try saying, "Slow down and walk" instead of "stop running."
- Try saying, "Come hold my hand" instead of "don't touch anything."
- Try saying, "Keep your feet on the floor" instead of "don't climb on the table."
- Try saying, "Use a quiet voice inside" instead of "stop shouting."



Talk with children – not “at” them.

- Children often don't pay attention when you are talking (or shouting) “at” them. Guidance is much more effective when you talk to children at their eye level. Look them in the eyes, touch them on the shoulder, and talk with them. Resist the urge to simply lecture. Instead, give children time to respond, and listen genuinely to their points of view.



Set a good example.

- Children watch you all the time. They see how you talk to other children and adults. They see how you cope with anger or frustration. They watch how you deal with sadness and joy. They listen to how you say “I’m sorry.” The way you handle the ups and downs of life teaches children a lot about how to behave and get along with others.



Encourage children to set good examples for each other.

- Children also learn a great deal from each other. Encourage appropriate ways to share, play, and be kind to each other.

Give clear, simple choices.

- Toddlers can choose between a red cup and a green cup. Preschoolers can choose between playing “airport” and “zookeeper.” Give children a choice only when there is a choice. For example, saying “It is nap time, do you want to lie down now?” is not really an option if your rule is that everyone will rest at nap time.



Show respect for children.

- Talk to children about misbehavior in private, rather than in front of others. Remind them of reasons for rules, and discuss what they can do differently.

Catch children being good.

- All children want attention. It is better to give them positive attention for good behavior than negative attention for misbehavior. Comment on something positive about each child, each day. Better yet, strive for several times a day. And share the good news. When children have done something positive, mention it to other children and to parents.



Encourage like a good coach instead of a cheerleader.

- A cheerleader just shouts general praise: “What a great job!” or “What a beautiful picture.” A good coach tells you what you’re doing right, uses praise as a teaching tool, and lets you know why he or she is proud of you. If a child sets the table, you might say, “You did such a good job setting the table! You put the spoons and forks in the right place and remembered the napkins!” When you look at a child’s painting, you might remark, “This painting just glows with color. You used blue, green, red, yellow, and orange. Tell me how you did this!”



Use play activities to teach social skills.

- Become a character in children's pretend play and show children how to use good manners and be kind. Read children's books that show how children resolve problems. Play "what if" games. Encourage children to act out ways to work together.

Teach children how to resolve conflict and solve problems

- Help them recognize and name feelings, identify problems clearly, come up with ideas for solving the problem, and try possible solutions.



Teach children how to apologize.

- Learning how to apologize is a skill. Young children have a hard time understanding another child's feelings, but by the time they are 4 years old they should begin to recognize that apologizing is a good way to make up for hurting someone else. Keep it simple (e.g., "Lucas, I'm sorry I hit you.") With time and practice, children will not have to be prompted, and their apology will be more genuine. Teach preschoolers and school-age children the four basic steps of apologizing:

- Look at the other child
- Say the child's name
- Say "I'm sorry"
- Say why



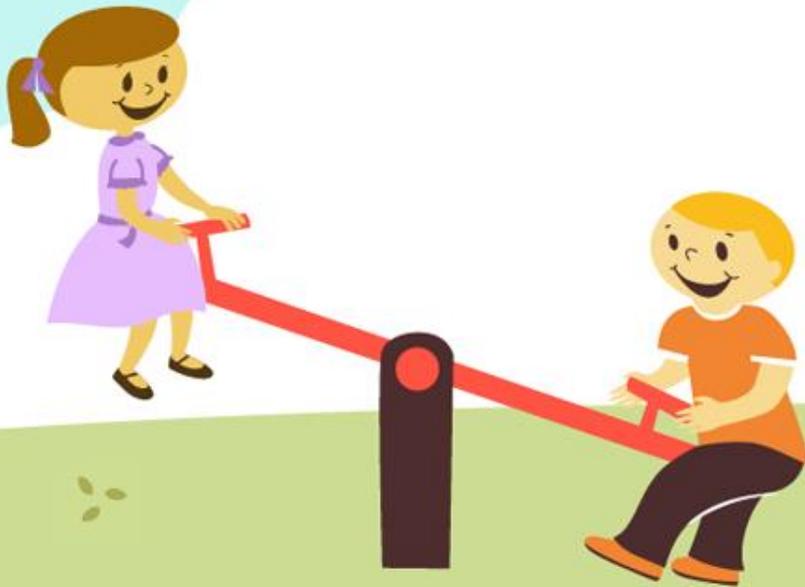
Teach children how to correct their misbehavior.

- If a child throws food onto the floor give him a broom and show him how to clean it up. If a child draws on the wall, give her a wet cloth to clean the wall. Even if the child cannot successfully clean up the entire mess alone, participating in clean-up teaches him that his actions have consequences. Over time, experiencing consequences helps children learn self-control.



Corporal Punishment

Ten Reasons Not To Hit Children



Around the World

In 47 countries around the world, it is illegal for a parent, teacher, or anyone else to spank a child, and 124 countries prohibit corporal punishment in schools.

Gentle instruction, supported by a strong foundation of love and respect, is a truly effective way to bring about commendable behavior based on strong inner values, instead of superficially "good" behavior based only on fear.



10 Reasons NOT to hit a child

- **1.** Hitting children teaches them to become hitters themselves. Extensive research data is now available to support a direct correlation between corporal punishment in childhood and aggressive or violent behavior in the teenage and adult years. Virtually all of the most dangerous criminals were regularly threatened and punished in childhood. It is nature's plan that children learn attitudes and behaviors through observation and imitation of their parents' actions, for good or ill. Thus it is the responsibility of parents to set an example of empathy and wisdom.



10 Reasons NOT to hit a child

- 2. In many cases of so-called "bad behavior", the child is simply responding in the only way he can, given his age and experience, to neglect of basic needs. Among these needs are: proper sleep and nutrition, treatment of hidden allergy, fresh air, exercise, and sufficient freedom to explore the world around him. But his greatest need is for his parents' undivided attention. In these busy times, few children receive sufficient time and attention from their parents, who are often too distracted by their own problems and worries to treat their children with patience and empathy. It is surely wrong and unfair to punish a child for responding in a natural way to having important needs neglected. For this reason, punishment is not only ineffective in the long run, it is also clearly unjust.



10 Reasons NOT to hit a child

- 3. Punishment distracts the child from learning how to resolve conflict in an effective and humane way. As the educator John Holt wrote, "When we make a child afraid, we stop learning dead in its tracks." A punished child becomes preoccupied with feelings of anger and fantasies of revenge, and is thus deprived of the opportunity to learn more effective methods of solving the problem at hand. Thus, a punished child learns little about how to handle or prevent similar situations in the future.



10 Reasons NOT to hit a child

- 4. Punishment interferes with the bond between parent and child, as it is not human nature to feel loving toward someone who hurts us. The true spirit of cooperation which every parent desires can arise only through a strong bond based on mutual feelings of love and respect. Punishment, even when it appears to work, can produce only superficially good behavior based on fear, which can only take place until the child is old enough to resist. In contrast, cooperation based on respect will last permanently, bringing many years of mutual happiness as the child and parent grow older.



10 Reasons NOT to hit a child

- 5. Many parents never learned in their own childhood that there are positive ways of relating to children. When punishment does not accomplish the desired goals, and if the parent is unaware of alternative methods, punishment can escalate to more frequent and dangerous actions against the child.
- 6. Anger and frustration which cannot be safely expressed by a child become stored inside; angry teenagers do not fall from the sky. Anger that has been accumulating for many years can come as a shock to parents whose child now feels strong enough to express this rage. Punishment may appear to produce "good behavior" in the early years, but always at a high price, paid by parents and by society as a whole, as the child enters adolescence and early adulthood.



10 Reasons NOT to hit a child

- 7. Spanking on the buttocks, an erogenous zone in childhood, can create in the child's mind an association between pain and sexual pleasure, and lead to difficulties in adulthood. "Spanking wanted" ads in alternative newspapers attest to the sad consequences of this confusion of pain and pleasure. If a child receives little parental attention except when being punished, this will further merge the concepts of pain and pleasure in the child's mind. A child in this situation will have little self-esteem, believing he deserves nothing better
- 8. Even relatively moderate spanking can be physically dangerous. Blows to the lower end of the spinal column send shock waves along the length of the spine, and may injure the child. The prevalence of lower back pain among adults in our society may well have its origins in childhood punishment. Some children have become paralyzed through nerve damage from spanking, and some have died after mild paddlings, due to undiagnosed medical complications.



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