



BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PARENT

18 MONTH VISIT

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.

✓ YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR

- Expect your child to cling to you in new situations or to be anxious around strangers.
- Play with your child each day by doing things she likes.
- Be consistent in discipline and setting limits for your child.
- Plan ahead for difficult situations and try things that can make them easier. Think about your day and your child's energy and mood.
- Wait until your child is ready for toilet training. Signs of being ready for toilet training include
 - Staying dry for 2 hours
 - Knowing if she is wet or dry
 - Can pull pants down and up
 - Wanting to learn
 - Can tell you if she is going to have a bowel movement
- Read books about toilet training with your child.
- Praise sitting on the potty or toilet.
- If you are expecting a new baby, you can read books about being a big brother or sister.
- Recognize what your child is able to do. Don't ask her to do things she is not ready to do at this age.

✓ YOUR CHILD AND TV

- Do activities with your child such as reading, playing games, and singing.
- Be active together as a family. Make sure your child is active at home, in child care, and with sitters.
- If you choose to introduce media now,
 - Choose high-quality programs and apps.
 - Use them together.
 - Limit viewing to 1 hour or less each day.
- Avoid using TV, tablets, or smartphones to keep your child busy.
- Be aware of how much media you use.

✓ TALKING AND HEARING

- Read and sing to your child often.
- Talk about and describe pictures in books.
- Use simple words with your child.
- Suggest words that describe emotions to help your child learn the language of feelings.
- Ask your child simple questions, offer praise for answers, and explain simply.
- Use simple, clear words to tell your child what you want him to do.

✓ HEALTHY EATING

- Offer your child a variety of healthy foods and snacks, especially vegetables, fruits, and lean protein.
- Give one bigger meal and a few smaller snacks or meals each day.
- Let your child decide how much to eat.
- Give your child 16 to 24 oz of milk each day.
- Know that you don't need to give your child juice. If you do, don't give more than 4 oz a day of 100% juice and serve it with meals.
- Give your toddler many chances to try a new food. Allow her to touch and put new food into her mouth so she can learn about them.

Helpful Resources: Poison Help Line: 800-222-1222

Information About Car Safety Seats: www.safercar.gov/parents | Toll-free Auto Safety Hotline: 888-327-4236

18 MONTH VISIT—PARENT

✓ SAFETY

- Make sure your child's car safety seat is rear facing until he reaches the highest weight or height allowed by the car safety seat's manufacturer. This will probably be after the second birthday.
- Never put your child in the front seat of a vehicle that has a passenger airbag. The back seat is the safest.
- Everyone should wear a seat belt in the car.
- Keep poisons, medicines, and lawn and cleaning supplies in locked cabinets, out of your child's sight and reach.
- Put the Poison Help number into all phones, including cell phones. Call if you are worried your child has swallowed something harmful. Do not make your child vomit.
- When you go out, put a hat on your child, have him wear sun protection clothing, and apply sunscreen with SPF of 15 or higher on his exposed skin. Limit time outside when the sun is strongest (11:00 am–3:00 pm).
- If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, store it unloaded and locked with the ammunition locked separately.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR CHILD'S 2 YEAR VISIT

We will talk about

- Caring for your child, your family, and yourself
- Handling your child's behavior
- Supporting your talking child
- Starting toilet training
- Keeping your child safe at home, outside, and in the car

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents, 4th Edition*

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Original handout included as part of the *Bright Futures Tool and Resource Kit*, 2nd Edition.

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Healthy Minds: Nurturing Your Child's Development from **18 to 24 Months**

What do we really know about how a young child develops? What can parents do to best support their child's healthy development and growing brain? Some of the answers are in this series of *Healthy Minds* handouts. Each handout is based on findings from a report* from the National Academy of Sciences that examined the research on child and brain development to establish what is known about the early years. The information we offer is age-specific, summarizes key findings from the report and suggests how you might be able to use these key findings to nurture your own child's healthy development.

These handouts are brought to you by ZERO TO THREE, the nation's leading resource on the first 3 years of life, and the American Academy of Pediatrics, dedicated to the health of all children.



► Key findings from the report include:

- Your relationship with your child is the foundation of his or her healthy development.
- Your child's development depends on both the traits he or she was born with (nature), and what he or she experiences (nurture).
- All areas of development (social/emotional/intellectual/language/motor) are linked. Each depends on, and influences, the others.
- What children experience, including how their parents respond to them, shapes their development as they adapt to the world.

How it looks in everyday family life:

Darryl is excited about taking his 21-month-old daughter, Alicia, to story hour at the local library. He is planning to meet a friend there, who is taking his own daughter. As they enter the room, Alicia spots the noisy crowd, buries her head in her dad's legs, and pulls him toward the door, whining, "Go home!" Darryl is disappointed and tries to get her to take a seat in the circle of children that's forming. But the more he pushes, the more distressed she becomes. Dad is ready to give up and go home. As they are leaving, he sees Alicia look at a book. He stops and asks if she'd like to read it and she nods yes. They sit in the back of the room and read quietly together. The group begins, and Alicia starts to look up more and more frequently to watch and listen to the storyteller. The next week, when Darryl asks if she'd like to go to story time, Alicia smiles and says, "Yes!"

This shows how all areas of Alicia's development are linked and how her father's response encourages her healthy development. Because of Alicia's **social and emotional connection** to her father, he is the one she goes to for safety and comfort when she is feeling anxious. She knows that she can count on her father for support. Her **intellectual ability** enables her to communicate her feelings by using her **language skills** – gestures, facial expressions and words. She uses her **motor ability** to pull on Dad to get him to take her home. Darryl's response helps Alicia master a challenging situation. He is able to put aside his own interest in staying at the group and "listens" to what Alicia is trying to tell him. This allows him to help her feel more comfortable entering a new situation, now and in the future.

Relationships are the foundation of healthy development.



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Charting Your Child's Healthy Development: 18 to 24 months

The following chart describes many of the things your toddler is learning between 18 and 24 months and what you can do to support your child in all areas of her development. As you read, remember that children develop at their own pace and in their own way. Understanding who your child is, what her strengths are and where she needs more support, is essential for promoting her healthy development. If you have questions regarding your child's development, ask your pediatrician.

What's going on:	What you can do:	Questions to ask yourself:
<p>Toddlers' vocabularies are growing by leaps and bounds. They are learning and saying many new words, and stringing words together, such as "Dolly fall." Toddlers are very independent and eager to be in control. Among their favorite words are "Me" and "Mine!"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand on what your child says. When she says, "Dolly fall!" you can say, "Yes, Dolly tumbled down to the floor!" This helps you expand your child's language skills. ● Give your toddler ways to feel in control by giving choices among options that are all acceptable. Let her choose between the red or blue cup and the pink or green shirt. Avoid asking her opinions when only one option is okay; for example, do not ask, "Are you ready to go?" unless she can stay longer. Use language to help her predict what will happen. "In five minutes it will be time to go." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are your child's strengths in communicating? Where does she need help? ● How does your child express her thoughts and feelings? Is she more likely to use her words or actions? How do you respond?
<p>Toddlers are developing self-control, but they still cannot stop themselves from doing something unacceptable, even after many reminders. They also don't yet understand the consequences of their actions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help prevent tantrums or loss of control by heading them off at the pass. If you see your child getting frustrated, try to calm her down and suggest another activity before she starts hurling puzzle pieces. Help your obviously angry toddler avoid a fight with her friend by inviting them to pause for a snack. ● Use consequences that are directly connected to the behavior of your child. If she is pouring water on her high chair after being told not to, take her out of her high chair. Then offer other acceptable options such as water play in the bathtub or outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What behaviors do you find most difficult to handle? Why? ● How were you disciplined as a child? How do you think that influences how you discipline your child?
<p>Toddlers are able to play and explore in more complex ways. They like toys that they can play with in many different ways such as blocks, cars and stuffed animals that lend themselves to imaginative play.</p> <p>Toddlers love to move. In just a matter of months, children go from crawling to walking to practically running! Practicing their new moves strengthens the brain connections that help with coordination. Children learn a lot from active play. For example, they learn about gravity and up and down when they swing and go down the slide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide your child with objects and toys that lend themselves to imaginative play and join in with them. You will learn a lot about her thoughts and feelings and can help her expand her thinking. Sand, water, play dough and drawing materials are all good choices for children this age. They help develop your child's creativity and strengthen muscles that your toddler will use later in handwriting. ● Turn a walk into a learning opportunity. Point out big and small dogs in the park. Talk about the colors of the cars on the street. This kind of learning makes new ideas and concepts stick. <p><i>*The report, From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development, was a 2½-year effort by a group of 17 leading professionals with backgrounds in neuroscience, psychology, child development, economics, education, pediatrics, psychiatry and public policy. They reviewed what was known about the nature of early child development and the influence of early experiences on children's health and well-being. The study was sponsored by a number of federal agencies and private foundations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are some of the ways your child uses pretend play? What does this tell you about her? ● What do you most/least enjoy about playing with your toddler?

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For more information go to:
www.zerotothree.org
www.aap.org

Executive Function Activities for 18- to 36-month-olds

During this stage of development, children are rapidly expanding their language skills. Language plays an important role in the development of executive function and self-regulation (EF/SR), as it helps children identify their thoughts and actions, reflect on them, and make plans that they hold in mind and use. Language also helps children understand and follow increasingly complex rules—both those that regulate behavior and those that apply to simple games. Additionally, bilingualism is associated with better EF/SR, so parents who are fluent in more than one language should use those languages with their children.



Active games

At this age, toddlers are actively developing many important physical skills, and they love physical challenges. The following activities require toddlers to focus and sustain their attention on a goal, inhibit unnecessary and ineffective actions, and try things in new ways if a first attempt fails. They may not always succeed, but the practice is very important. This is a learning process. Many of these activities will require frequent reminders from adult organizers, and they may not last very long!

- **Provide many materials and opportunities** to try new skills, such as throwing and catching balls, walking a balance beam, running up and down an incline, jumping, etc. Set up simple rules to follow for added working memory and inhibition challenges—for example, take turns running to a “finish line” and back.

- **Older toddlers can enjoy simple imitation games**, such as *Follow the Leader*, or song games like *Punchinella* or *Follow, Follow* (“Follow, follow, follow [child’s name], follow, follow, follow [child’s name]”—all children imitate [child]). These are great tests of working memory as well as attention and inhibition.

- **Games that require active inhibition** can be fun, too, like *freeze dance (musical statues)*, although don’t expect children to “freeze” without a few reminders. Also effective are

song games that require children to start and stop, or slow down and speed up, such as *Jack in the Box*; *Popcorn*; *Ring Around the Rosie*; or *Motorboat, Motorboat*.

- **Song games with many movements** are also fun. Examples include *The Hokey Pokey*; *Teddy Bear*; *I’m a Little Teapot*; or *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes*. These require children to attend to the song’s words and hold them in working memory, using the song to guide their actions.

- **Fingerplays, or songs and rhymes with hand gestures** to match, continue to be popular with children this age, similarly challenging children’s attention, working memory, and inhibitory control.



Conversation and storytelling

As children develop more spoken language skills, they can begin to engage actively in conversation with adults and tell simple stories.

■ **Simply watching and narrating their play** can be a great way to help very young children understand how language can describe their actions. As children get older, questions can be added, such as “What will you do next?” or “I see you want to put the ball inside the jar. Is there another way to do that?” These comments help children pause to reflect on what they are trying to do, how what they have tried has worked, and how to plan their next move.

■ **Telling stories about shared events** can be a great way to reflect on these experiences. The

experience must be held in working memory while the child considers the order in which things happened, why things happened the way they did, and what the experience meant. These stories can also be written or drawn into simple books and revisited.

■ **Talking about feelings** is also important, either by labeling children’s feelings as they are noticed (“It looks like you are really angry right now”) or by telling the story of a time a child became upset. By giving children language to reflect on their feelings, these conversations can support the development of emotional regulation, which is essential for engaging executive function.

Matching/sorting games

Children this age are able to play simple matching and sorting games, which require children to understand the rule that organizes the activity (sorting by shape, color, size, etc.), hold the rule in mind, and follow it.

■ **Ask children to play a sorting game** in which you take turns sorting objects by size, shape, or color.

■ **Engage older toddlers in a silly sorting game**, such as putting small shapes in a big bucket and big shapes in a small bucket.

Children tend to put like with like, so a change is challenging, requiring them to inhibit the expected action and engage their selective attention and working memory.

■ **As they get older, toddlers also start to enjoy simple puzzles**, which require attention to shapes and colors. Adults can ask children to think about what shape or color they need, where they might put a certain piece, or where they might put the piece if it doesn’t fit, thereby exercising the child’s reflection and planning skills.

Imaginary play

Toddlers are beginning to develop the capacity for simple imaginary play. Often, toddlers imitate adult actions using objects that they have available (such as sweeping with a broom or pretending to cook with a pot). When they reach this age, these actions are not simply imitative, but can be sustained and show signs of simple imaginary play plots. For example, after “cooking” in the pot, the child will put the pot on the table and pretend to eat.

■ **Ask children questions** about what they are doing. Narrate the things you see happening.

■ **Play along with the child**, and let the child direct the play. Give the child a chance to tell you what role you should play and how you should do it. Regulating the behavior of others is an important way that children develop their own self-regulation skills.

■ **Provide a variety** of familiar household objects, toys, and clothing items to encourage children’s imaginary play.

Resources

Music

■ fun.familyeducation.com/toddler/music/37371.html

Other activities

■ www.zerotothree.org/child-development/grandparents/play-12-24-final.pdf

■ www.zerotothree.org/child-development/grandparents/play-24-36-final.pdf

Pretend play suggestions

■ www.mindinthemaking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PFL-playing-with-household-items.pdf

SAFETY REMINDER

Your child is getting older and they are more active. Now that you have childproofed your home, your child may be exposed to many dangers as they explore their environment. Did you know that nearly 300 children under the age of 4 die every month in the United States because of accidents-most of which can be prevented?

Often, accidents happen because parents are not aware of what their children can do. At this age, your child can walk, run, climb, jump and explore everything. Because of these expanding skills, this is a very dangerous time in your child's life. Your child cannot understand danger or remember "No" while exploring, therefore it is your responsibility to protect them from danger.

FIREARM HAZARDS

Children in homes where guns are present are in more danger of being shot by themselves, or another person, than injured by an intruder. It is best to keep all guns out of the home. If you must keep a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place separate from the ammunition.

POISONINGS

Children continue to explore their world by putting everything in their mouths, even if it doesn't taste good. Your child can open doors and drawers, take things apart, and open bottles easily now, so you must use safety caps on all medicines and toxic household products. Your child is now able to get into and on top of everything. Be sure to keep all household products and medicines out of sight, out of reach, and locked up.

If your child does put something poisonous into their mouths, call the Poison Control Center immediately. The number is in the front pages of any phone book and should be kept close to your phone. (1-800-222-1222)

FALLS

To prevent serious falls, lock the doors to any dangerous area. Use gates on stairways and install window guards above the first floor. Since children are more agile, even leaving a chair next to a kitchen counter or table can lead to an accident. Remember, your child does not understand what is dangerous.

BURNS

The kitchen is a dangerous place for your child during meal preparation. Hot liquids, grease, and hot food spills on your child can cause serious burns. Children who are learning to walk will grab anything to steady themselves, including hot oven doors or wall heaters. Your child will reach for your hot food or cup of coffee, so never leave them within your child's reach. Never carry your child and hot liquids at the same time. If they do get burned, immediately pour cold water on the area.

DROWNING

At this age children love to play in water. Never leave your child alone in or near a bathtub, pail of water, wading or swimming pool, or any other water, even for a moment. Empty all buckets after use. Your child can drown in less than 2 inches of water. Knowing how to swim does not mean your child is safe near or in water.

CAR SAFETY

Car crashes are a great danger to your child's health. The only way to prevent these injuries is to use a car seat every time your child rides in a car. Always walk behind your car to be sure your child is not there before you back up.

THE BIGGEST THREAT TO YOUR CHILD'S LIFE IS AN ACCIDENT.

Temper Tantrums: A NORMAL PART OF GROWING UP



Strong emotions are hard for a young child to hold inside. When children feel frustrated, angry, or disappointed, they often express themselves by crying, screaming, or stomping up and down. As a parent, you may feel angry, helpless, or embarrassed. Temper tantrums are a normal part of your child's development as he learns self-control. In fact, almost all children have tantrums between the ages of 1 and 3. You've heard them called "the terrible twos." The good news is that by age 4, temper tantrums usually stop.

Why do children have tantrums?

Your young child is busy learning many things about her world. She is eager to take control. She wants to be independent and may try to do more than her skills will allow. She wants to make her own choices and often may not cope well with not getting her way. She is even less able to cope when she is tired, hungry, frustrated, or frightened. Controlling her temper may be one of the most difficult lessons to learn.

Temper tantrums are a way for your child to let off steam when she is upset. Following are some of the reasons your child may have a temper tantrum:

- Your child may not fully understand what you are saying or asking, and may get confused.
- Your child may become upset when others cannot understand what she is saying.
- Your child may not have the words to describe her feelings and needs. After 3 years of age, most children can express their feelings, so temper tantrums taper off. Children who are not able to express their feelings very well with words are more likely to continue to have tantrums.
- Your child has not yet learned to solve problems on her own and gets discouraged easily.
- Your child may have an illness or other physical problem that keeps her from expressing how she feels.
- Your child may be hungry, but may not recognize it.
- Your child may be tired or not getting enough sleep.
- Your child may be anxious or uncomfortable.
- Your child may be reacting to stress or changes at home.
- Your child may be jealous of a friend or sibling. Children often want what other children have or the attention they receive.
- Your child may not yet be able to do the things she can imagine, such as walking or running, climbing down stairs or from furniture, drawing things, or making toys work.

How to help prevent temper tantrums

As a parent, you can sometimes tell when tantrums are coming. Your child may seem moody, cranky, or difficult. He may start to whine and whimper. It may seem as if nothing will make him happy. Finally, he may start to cry, kick, scream, fall to the ground, or hold his breath. Other times, a tantrum may come on suddenly for no obvious reason. You should not be surprised if your child has tantrums only in front of you. This is one way of testing your rules and

A word about...safety

Many times, you will have to tell your child "no" to protect her from harm or injury. For example, the kitchen and bathroom can be hazardous places for your child. Your child will have trouble understanding why you will not let her play there. This is a common cause of a tantrum.

"Childproof" your home and make dangerous areas or objects off-limits.

Keep an eye on your child at all times. After telling your child "no," never leave her alone in a situation that could be hazardous. Take away dangerous objects from your child immediately and replace them with something safe. It is up to you to keep your child safe and teach her how to protect herself from getting hurt. Be consistent and clear about safety.

limits. Many children will not act out their feelings around others and are more cautious with strangers. Children feel safer showing their feelings to the people they trust.

You will not be able to prevent all tantrums, but the following suggestions may help reduce the chances of a tantrum:

- **Encourage your child to use words** to tell you how he is feeling, such as "I'm really mad." Try to understand how he is feeling and suggest words he can use to describe his feelings.
- **Set reasonable limits** and don't expect your child to be perfect. Give simple reasons for the rules you set, and don't change the rules.
- **Keep a daily routine** as much as possible, so your child knows what to expect.
- **Avoid situations that will frustrate your child**, such as playing with children or toys that are too advanced for your child's abilities.
- **Avoid long outings or visits** where your child has to sit still or cannot play for long periods of time. If you have to take a trip, bring along your child's favorite book or toy to entertain him.
- **Be prepared with healthy snacks when your child gets hungry.**
- **Make sure your child is well rested**, especially before a busy day or stressful activity.
- **Distraction your child** from activities likely to lead to a tantrum. Suggest different activities. If possible, being silly, playful, or making a joke can help ease a tense situation. Sometimes, something as simple as changing locations can prevent a tantrum. For example, if you are indoors, try taking your child outside to distract his attention.
- **Be choosy about saying "no."** When you say no to every demand or request your child makes, it will frustrate him. Listen carefully to requests. When a request is not too unreasonable or inconvenient, consider saying yes. When your child's safety is involved, do not change your decision because of a tantrum.

- **Let your child choose whenever possible.** For example, if your child resists a bath, make it clear that he will be taking a bath, but offer a simple decision he can make on his own. Instead of saying, “Do you want to take a bath?” Try saying, “It’s time for your bath. Would you like to walk upstairs or have me carry you?”
- **Set a good example.** Avoid arguing or yelling in front of your child.

What to do when tantrums occur

When your child has a temper tantrum, follow the suggestions listed below:

1. Distract your child by calling his attention to something else, such as a new activity, book, or toy. Sometimes just touching or stroking a child will calm him. You may need to gently restrain or hold your child. Interrupt his behavior with a light comment like, “Did you see what the kitty is doing?” or “I think I heard the doorbell.” Humor or something as simple as a funny face can also help.
2. Try to remain calm. If you shout or become angry, it is likely to make things worse. Remember, the more attention you give this behavior, the more likely it is to happen again.
3. Minor displays of anger such as crying, screaming, or kicking can usually be ignored. Stand nearby or hold your child without talking until he calms down. This shows your support. If you cannot stay calm, leave the room.
4. Some temper tantrums cannot be ignored. The following behaviors should not be ignored and are *not* acceptable:
 - Hitting or kicking parents or others
 - Throwing things in a dangerous way
 - Prolonged screaming or yelling

Use a cooling-off period or a “time-out” to remove your child from the source of his anger. Take your child away from the situation and hold him or give him some time alone to calm down and regain control. For children old enough to understand, a good rule of thumb for a time-out is 1 minute of time for every year of your child’s age. (For example, a 4 year old would get a 4-minute time-out.) But even 15 seconds will work. If you cannot stay calm, leave the room. Wait a minute or two, or until his crying stops, before returning. Then help him get interested in something else. If your child is old enough, talk about what happened and discuss other ways to deal with it next time.

For more information, ask your pediatrician about the American Academy of Pediatrics brochure *Discipline and Your Child*.

You should never punish your child for temper tantrums. He may start to keep his anger or frustration inside, which can be unhealthy. Your response to tantrums should be calm and understanding. As your child grows, he will learn to deal with his strong emotions. Remember, it is normal for children to test their parents’ rules and limits.

Do not give in by offering rewards

Do not reward your child for stopping a tantrum. Rewards may teach your child that a temper tantrum will help her get her way. When tantrums do not accomplish anything for your child, they are less likely to continue.

You may also feel guilty about saying “no” to your child at times. Be consistent and avoid sending mixed signals. When parents don’t clearly enforce certain rules, it is harder for children to understand which rules are firm and which ones are not. Be sure you are having some fun each day with your child. Think carefully about the rules you set and don’t set too many. Discuss with those who care for your child which rules are really needed and be firm about them. Respond the same way every time your child breaks the rules.

When temper tantrums are serious

Your child should have fewer temper tantrums by the middle of his fourth year. Between tantrums, his behavior should seem normal and healthy. Like every child, yours will grow and learn at his own pace. It may take time for him to learn how to control his temper. When the outbursts are severe or happen too often, they may be an early sign of emotional problems. Talk to your pediatrician if your child causes harm to himself or others during tantrums, holds his breath and faints, or if the tantrums get worse after age 4. Your pediatrician will make sure there are no serious physical or psychological problems causing the tantrums. He or she can also give you advice to help you deal with these outbursts.

It is important to realize that temper tantrums are a normal part of growing up. Tantrums are not easy to deal with, and they can be a little scary for you and your child. Using a loving and understanding approach will help your child through this part of his development.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

Discipline and Your Child



As a parent, it is your job to teach your child the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. But getting your child to behave the way you want is not as hard as you think. This brochure will help you learn effective ways to discipline your child.

Because learning takes time, especially for a young child, you may find that it takes several weeks of working on a behavior before you see a change. Try not to get frustrated when you do not see the results of your efforts right away.

Discipline vs punishment

Many parents think discipline and punishment are the same thing. However, they are really quite different. Discipline is a whole system of teaching based on a good relationship, praise, and instruction for the child on how to control his behavior. Punishment is negative; an unpleasant consequence for doing or not doing something. Punishment should be only a very small part of discipline.

Effective discipline should take place all the time, not just when children misbehave. Children are more likely to change their behavior when they feel encouraged and valued, not shamed and humiliated. When children feel good about themselves and cherish their relationship with their parents, they are more likely to listen and learn.

Encourage good behavior from infancy

You can begin laying the groundwork for good behavior from the time your child is born. When you respond to your infant's cries, you are teaching her that you are there, you can be counted on when she needs you, and that she can trust you. When your child is about 2 months of age, start to modify your responses and encourage your baby to establish good sleeping patterns by letting her fall asleep on her own. By keeping a reasonably steady schedule, you can guide her toward eating, sleeping, and playing at times that are appropriate for your family. This lays the groundwork for acceptable behavior later on.

Once your baby starts to crawl (between 6 and 9 months of age) and as she learns to walk (between 9 and 16 months of age), safety is the most critical discipline issue. The best thing you can do for your child at this age is to give her the freedom to explore certain things and make other things off-limits. For example, put childproof locks on some cabinets, such as those that contain heavy dishes or pots, or poisonous substances like cleaning products. Leave other cabinets open. Fill the open cabinets with plastic containers or soft materials that your child can play with. This feeds your baby's need to explore and practice, but in safe ways that are acceptable to you.

You will need to provide extra supervision during this period. If your child moves toward a dangerous object, such as a hot stove, simply pick her up, firmly say, "no, hot" and offer her a toy to play with instead. She may laugh at first as she tries to understand you but, after a few weeks, she will learn.

Discipline issues become more complex at about 18 months of age. At this time, a child wants to know how much power she has and will test the limit of that power over and over again. It is important for parents to decide—together—what those limits will be and stick to them. Parents need to be very

clear about what is acceptable behavior. This will reduce the child's confusion and her need to test. Setting consistent guidelines for children when they are young also will help establish important rules for the future.

If you and your partner disagree, discuss it with each other when you are not with your child. Do not interfere with each other when your child is present. This upsets the child or teaches her to set the adults up against each other which can cause more problems.

Tips to avoid trouble

One of the keys to effective discipline is avoiding power struggles. This can be a challenge with young children. It is best to address only those issues that truly are important to you. The following tips may help:

- **Offer choices whenever possible.** By giving acceptable choices, you can set limits and still allow your child some independence. For example, try saying, "Would you like to wear the red shirt or the blue one?"
- **Make a game out of good behavior.** Your child is more likely to do what you want if you make it fun. For example, you might say, "Let's have a race and see who can put his coat on first."
- **Plan ahead.** If you know that certain circumstances always cause trouble, such as a trip to the store, discuss with your child ahead of time what behavior is acceptable and what the consequences will be if he does not obey. Try to plan the shopping trip for a time when your child is well rested and well fed, and take along a book or small toy to amuse him if he gets bored.
- **Praise good behavior.** Whenever your child remembers to follow the rules, offer encouragement and praise about how well he did. You do not need any elaborate system of rewards. You can simply say, "Thank you for coming right away," and hug your child. Praise for acceptable behavior should be frequent, especially for young children.

Strategies that work

Of course you cannot avoid trouble all of the time. Sooner or later your child will test you. It is your child's way of finding out whether you can be trusted and really will do what you say you will do if she does not listen to you.

When your child does not listen, try the following techniques. Not only will they encourage your child to cooperate now, but they will teach her how to behave in the future as well.

Natural consequences. When a child sees the natural consequences of her actions, she experiences the direct results of her choices. (But be sure the consequences do not place her in any danger.) For example, if your child drops her cookies on purpose, she will not have cookies to eat. If she throws and breaks her toy, she will not be able to play with it. It will not be long before your child learns not to drop her cookies and to play carefully with her toys.

When you use this method, resist the urge to lecture your child or to rescue her (by getting more cookies, for example). Your child will learn best when she learns for herself and will not blame you for the consequences she receives.

Logical consequences. Natural consequences work best, but they are not always appropriate. For example, if your child does not pick up her toys, they may be in the way. But chances are she will not care as much as you do. For older children, you will need to step in and create a consequence that is closely connected to her actions. You might tell her that if she does not pick up her toys, then you will put them away where she will not be allowed to play with them again for a whole day. Children less than 6 years of age need adult help picking up yet can be asked to assist with the task. If your child refuses your request for help, take her by the hand as you silently finish the job. This insistence that your child participate, along with your silence, becomes a clear consequence for your child.

When you use this method, it is important that you mean what you say and that you are prepared to follow through *immediately*. Let your child know that you are serious. You do not have to yell and scream to do this. You can say it in a calm, matter-of-fact way.

Withholding privileges. In the heat of the moment, you will not always be able to think of a logical consequence. That is when you may want to tell your child that, if she does not cooperate, she will have to give something up she likes. The following are a few things to keep in mind when you use this technique:

- Never take away something your child truly needs, such as a meal.
- Choose something that your child values that is related to the misbehavior.
- For children younger than 6 or 7 years of age, withholding privileges works best if done immediately following the problem behavior. For instance, if your young child misbehaves in the morning and you withhold television viewing for that evening, your child probably will not connect the behavior with the consequence.
- Be sure you can follow through on your promise.

Time-out. Time-out should be your last resort and you should use it only when other responses do not work. Time-outs work well when the behavior you are trying to punish is clearly defined and you know when it occurred. Time-outs also can be helpful if you need a break to stay calm. You can use a time-out with a child as young as 1 year old. Follow these steps to make a time-out work:

1. Choose a time-out spot. This should be a boring place with no distractions, such as a chair. Remember the main goal is to separate the child from the activity and people connected with the misbehavior. It should allow the child to pause and cool off. (Keep in mind that bathrooms can be dangerous and bedrooms may become playgrounds.) Decide which 2 or 3 behaviors will be punished with time-out and explain this to your child.
2. When your child does something she knows will result in a time-out, you may warn her once (unless it is aggression). If it happens again, send her to the time-out spot *immediately*. Tell her what she did wrong in as few words as possible. A rule of thumb is 1 minute of time out for every year of your child's age. (For example, a 4-year-old would get a 4-minute time-out.) But even 15 seconds will work. If your child will not go to the spot on her own, pick her up and carry her there. If she will not stay, stand behind her and hold her gently but firmly by the shoulders or restrain her in your lap and say, "I am holding you here because you have to have a time-out." Do not discuss it any further. It should only take a couple of weeks before she learns to cooperate and will choose to sit quietly rather than be held down for time-out.
3. Once your child is capable of sitting quietly, set a timer so that she will know when the time-out is over. If fussing starts again, restart the timer. Wait until your child stops protesting before you set the timer.

4. When the time is up, help your child return to a positive activity. Your child has "served her time." Do not lecture or ask for apologies. If you need to discuss her behavior, wait until later to do so.

Tips to make discipline more effective

You will have days when it seems impossible to get your child to behave. But there are ways to ease frustration and avoid unnecessary conflict with your child.

- Be aware of your child's abilities and limitations. Children develop at different rates and have different strengths and weaknesses. When your child misbehaves, it may be that he simply cannot do what you are asking of him or he does not understand what you are asking.
- **Think before you speak.** Once you make a rule or promise, you will need to stick to it. Be sure you are being realistic. Think if it is really necessary before saying "no."
- **Remember that children do what "works."** If your child throws a temper tantrum in the grocery store and you bribe him to stop by giving him candy, he will probably throw another tantrum the next time you go. Make an effort to avoid reinforcing the wrong kinds of behavior, even with just your attention.
- **Work toward consistency.** No one is consistent all of the time. But try to make sure that your goals, rules, and approaches to discipline stay the same from day to day. Children find frequent changes confusing and often resort to testing limits just to find out what the limits are.
- **Pay attention to your child's feelings.** If you can figure out why your child is misbehaving, you are one step closer to solving the problem. It is kinder and helps with cooperation when you let your child know that you understand. For example, "I know you are feeling sad that your friend is leaving, but you still have to pick up your toys." Watch for patterns that tell you misbehavior has a special meaning, such as your child is feeling jealous. Talk to your child about this rather than just giving consequences.
- **Learn to see mistakes—including your own—as opportunities to learn.** If you do not handle a situation well the first time, don't despair. Think about what you could have done differently, and try to do it the next time. If you feel you have made a real mistake in the heat of the moment, wait to cool down, apologize to your child, and explain how you will handle the situation in the future. Be sure to keep your promise. This gives your child a good model of how to recover from mistakes.

Set an example

Telling your child how to behave is an important part of discipline, but *showing* her how to behave is even more significant. Children learn a lot about temper and self-control from watching their parents and other adults interact. If they see adults relating in a positive way toward one another, they will learn that this is how others should be treated. This is how children learn to act respectfully.

Even though your children's behavior and values seem to be on the right track, your children will still challenge you because it is in their nature and is a part of growing up. Children are constantly learning what their limits are, and they need their parents to help them understand those limits. By doing so, parents can help their children feel capable and loved, learn right from wrong, develop good behavior, have a positive approach toward life, and become productive, good citizens.

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

Why spanking is not the best choice

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that if punishment is needed, alternatives to spanking should be used.

Although most Americans were spanked as children, we now know that it has several important side effects.

- It may seem to work at the moment, but it is no more effective in changing behavior than a time-out.
- Spanking increases children's aggression and anger instead of teaching responsibility.
- Parents may intend to stay calm but often do not, and regret their actions later.
- Because most parents do not want to spank, they are less likely to be consistent.
- Spanking makes other consequences less effective, such as those used at child care or school. Gradually, even spanking loses its impact.
- Spanking can lead to physical struggles and even escalate to the point of harming the child.
- Children who continue to be spanked are more likely to be depressed, use alcohol, have more anger, hit their own children, approve of and hit their spouses, and engage in crime and violence as adults.
- These results make sense since spanking teaches the child that causing others pain is justified to control them—even with those they love.

If you are having trouble disciplining your child or need more information on alternatives to spanking, talk to your pediatrician.

From your doctor



READY, SET, READ

The Importance of Reading to Young Children

“As parents, the most important thing we can do is read to our children early and often. Reading is the path to success in school and life. When children learn to love books, they learn to love learning.”

-Laura Bush-

Learning how to read begins in infancy when we talk, read, and listen to our babies. Through this process, infants and children learn what words have meanings and are important. Taking time out to engage in these learning activities with your child will definitely shape the future of your child's success. It is important to remember that not all children will learn at the same pace, and to follow their lead.

Reading a book more than once to a child will help them remember the story, and allow them to actively participate in the story. Sometimes it is important to ask the child to tell you the story, or what they think the story is about. This will encourage active thinking. Learning to read will take time and lots of patience.

Here are some things to consider when reading with your child:

Babies (6 weeks to 1 year)

- Find a comfortable place to read to your child, where he or she will be happy.
- Try to point out the pictures in a book, instead of reading all the words in a book.
- Help your baby to use his or her hands to touch the pictures named in a book. This will help to encourage joint attention and learning.
- Pay attention to how your child is responding, and recognize when the child is tired or becomes over stimulated.

Toddlers (1 to 3 years)

- Find a book your child enjoys and encourage the child to actively participate in the story.
- Give the child time to process the story and to respond to questions asked.
- Relate the story back to experiences in the child's life or ask the child to recall similar experiences.
- Point out letters, colors, and shapes to the child while reading.

Preschoolers (3 and 4 years)

- Continue with all activities recommended above.
- Find ways to help you child learn sounds and letters, and match correct letters to sounds.

Kindergarteners (5 years)

- Continue with all activities recommended above.
- Help your child to begin recognizing printed words.
- Ask you child to retell stories they enjoy.

First Graders (6 years)

- Continue with all activities recommended above.
- Give your child an opportunity to read by using words, picture clues and memory. Help the child to use any method that will make reading fun and enjoyable.