

How to Give a Time-Out

Giving a child a time-out can be a useful tool to help them cool down and learn good behavior.

Here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics.



The basics of a time-out—by the numbers:

1. Warn your child first, *"If you don't stop, you'll have a time-out."*
2. Name the behavior (i.e., *"don't hit"*).
3. Have your child go to a quiet place, like a corner of a room, not the bedroom or a play room.
4. Start the timer—1 minute for each year of age. For example:
 - 2 years old = 2 minutes
 - 3 years old = 3 minutes
 - 4 years old = 4 minutes
 - 5 years old = 5 minutes
5. If your child leaves the time out area, have her go back. If she throws a tantrum ([/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Temper-Tantrums.aspx](#)) during time-out, ignore it unless there is danger of harm.
6. Restart the timer. Explain that he needs to *"stay put"* until it's over.

Should I skip the timer?

With children who are at least 3 years old, parents can try letting their children lead their own time-out. You can just say, *"Go to time out and come back when you feel ready and in control."* This can take the place of the timer and help the child

learn and practice self-management skills. This strategy also works well for older children and teens.

Adults can take time-outs, too.

Correcting a child's behavior can be hard and, sometimes, frustrating. If you start to feel stressed or out of control, you can take a time-out for yourself. First make sure your child is in a safe place, like a playpen, crib, or bedroom. Then, do something you find relaxing, like listening to music, reading or meditation. When you feel calm, go hug your child and start fresh.

Remember:

Grandparents and other caregivers can learn how time-outs work, too. Like with all discipline tools, the key is trying to use time-outs the same way each time for the behavior you want to stop. But, remember, time-outs can be used too much. Try other positive ways to correct your child's behavior (</English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx>). Talk with your pediatrician for more ideas.

Additional Information:

- [What's the Best Way to Discipline My Child? \(/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx\)](/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Your-Child.aspx)
- [15 Tips to Survive the Terrible 3's \(/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Tips-to-Survive-the-Terrible-3s.aspx\)](/English/ages-stages/preschool/Pages/Tips-to-Survive-the-Terrible-3s.aspx)
- [How to Shape and Manage Your Young Child's Behavior \(/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/How-to-Shape-Manage-Young-Child-Behavior.aspx\)](/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/How-to-Shape-Manage-Young-Child-Behavior.aspx)
- [Disciplining Older Children \(/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Older-Children.aspx\)](/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Disciplining-Older-Children.aspx)
- [Effective Discipline to Raise Healthy Children \(https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3112\)](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2018-3112) (AAP Policy Statement)

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