



Timeout

A way to discipline without spanking

You & Your Child

A guide for new parents

All children need rules, limits, and education about what is right or expected. The way you discipline your child is important.

Discipline has three parts:

- Setting up a positive home environment.
- Encouraging good behavior.
- Discouraging unacceptable behavior.

There are several ways to discourage unacceptable behavior. Spanking is one of the most popular ways. But spanking doesn't work as well as many parents believe it does. And it may cause serious problems. It can hurt the relationship between you and your child.

A 'time out' involves no hitting

For serious misbehavior, try giving your child a "time out."

A time out is having your child sit in an isolated place with nothing to do for a short time, usually 2-to-5 minutes, depending on your child's age. It seems to work best with children ages 3-6.

A time out should be used only when you need to discipline serious misbehavior. It replaces spanking as the punishment of last resort.

ON BACK
HOW TO MAKE A TIME OUT WORK FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD.



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A WAY TO DISCIPLINE WITHOUT SPANKING

Write down serious misbehaviors

List five or six undesirable behaviors that merit a punishment of time out. These should be serious problems, such as hitting, deliberately doing something dangerous, or doing something you just told your child not to do.

Discuss these rules with your child

If your child is older, try getting him or her to suggest some behaviors that deserve a time out.

Pick a good place for the time out

Find a place in the house where there are few objects and there is nothing to do. It is best if you can see your child when he or she is having a time out, so don't use a closet or someplace far from you. Try to use the same place each time. But you can do a time out anywhere, including the car, at a store, or at a friend's house.

Sit your child in a chair

Give 3-year-olds a 2-3 minute time out. Give older children a time out of up to 5 minutes. Have your child sit facing the wall, without wiggling. Your child should not talk, play with toys, or be entertained in any way during a time out. Brothers and sisters should leave the child alone.

Use a timer

If you have a kitchen timer, put it someplace where your child can see it so he or she can watch the moments tick by.

Go about your business

Leave your child alone in a time out. But stay close enough to watch. You can ignore a little wiggling or humming as long as your child is basically sitting still.



A WAY TO DISCIPLINE WITHOUT SPANKING

If your child gets up

It is not unusual, especially at first, for children to get up or talk during a time out.

If that happens, explain that is not allowed and that you must add one more minute to the time out.

But there are limits. Don't add too many minutes. For 3 year olds, the total length of a time out should be no more than 5 minutes. For older children, no more than 10-15 minutes total.

When time out ends

When time is up, tell your child that he or she may leave the time out. Thank your child for sitting still, if in fact, he or she did so.

Don't lecture or go back over the problem that led to your child getting a time out. But do tell your child what to do the next time.

If your child won't cooperate

Try these alternatives if your child refuses to sit still or take a time out.

- If your child is new to the idea of a time out, demonstrate. Sit with your child in time out the first time. But do not play, or talk.
- Take a time out yourself. Tell your child you need to be away from him or her for a few minutes. And make sure you explain what the bad behavior was that makes you want to do this. Then, if your child is old enough, go into the bathroom or a bedroom and close the door for a few minutes. Otherwise, turn your back and remain quiet.
- Try other punishments. If your child outgrows a time out (usually around ages 6-7), try denying privileges or requiring some work to be done as punishment.

