

S.K.I.P

Strategies with Kids | Information for Parents

# Managing Behaviour



**Guidance, or discipline, is most effective in a warm and loving relationship, where your child feels supported and secure.**

**“Say lots more positive than negative things”**

**“Behave in the same way you want your children to”**

# Managing behaviour

Children explore and experiment to find out about the world and their place in it. They climb, taste, poke, jump, touch and ask a million questions. This helps them to make sense of the world around them and learn where their boundaries are.

You can help guide all of this exploration by making sure your child keeps safe and giving them new things to learn about. By doing this you are helping your child to develop the skills and understanding they will need as they grow into adults.

Guidance, or discipline, is most effective in a warm and loving relationship, where your child feels supported and secure.

**“Consistency is the key”**

**“Kids want  
to please - they  
want to get  
it right”**



# What works

- Give lots of love and warmth and praise.
- Communicate clearly. Tell your child when they are doing well so they develop the self confidence to try new things. Praise your child so they repeat the behaviour you like.
- Be clear about what you would like your child to do, and what you don't want them to do. Set clear limits and boundaries.
- If something does go wrong, talk to them about what happened. They might need help to work things out. If they are very young and you can't have a chat, think about what happened – they may be tired, hungry, or frustrated and not be able to tell you.
- If your child is refusing to do something, try to understand why. They could be wanting more attention, be frustrated or feel unsure of themselves. They might just need a hug or some encouraging words.
- Talk to your child about consequences. For instance you could tell them that if they hit the cat it might scratch them, or if they throw a toy it might break. Keep things brief and use words they will understand.

**“Be firm,  
fair and  
friendly”**

**“Praise them  
when they’re  
doing well, keep  
the momentum  
going”**

- If you ask them not to do something and they do it, follow through with some consequences. This might mean saying sorry if they hit someone, or helping you to clean up if they make a mess.
- Say sorry yourself. This will help your child learn to say it too. Act as you want your child to act.
- Be patient. It takes time for a child to develop their own self discipline.
- Plan. Put precious things out of reach, don't take your child to the supermarket if they're tired, and teach your child to cross at the lights.

- Try not to say "no" and "don't" all the time. Instead of saying "don't run in the house" say "walk in the house, you might hurt yourself if you run". Instead of "no we can't go to the park" say "maybe tomorrow".
- Have realistic expectations – a small child won't be able to sit still for a long time or will end up with food all over the place when they first start eating on their own. You can change rules and expectations as they grow and develop more skills.



# What works cont.

- Try to have routines for eating and sleeping. This helps children become organised and feel secure.
- When things get difficult. Pause, prompt and praise. Pause to calm down, discuss the problem to prompt a solution, then praise them for listening.

**“Giving your child lots of attention and love won’t spoil them”**

**“Yelling and smacking really does escalate things. I find a quiet voice, close up, better”**



- Keep your sense of humour. Sometimes you have a split second when you can decide whether you're going to get really angry, or whether you'll see the funny side. If a child has smeared lipstick all over their face, and you laugh, you can still ask them not to do it again and explain why.

## What doesn't work

- Don't withhold love when your child does something wrong. This gives the message that you don't like them, when what you don't like is their behaviour.
- Smacking or hitting doesn't teach your child what they did wrong. It teaches them that hitting other people is okay.
- Yelling and screaming can make things build up into major battles. Take a deep breath, walk away for a minute, be calm.



**“I get lots of ideas from other parents”**

**“You are your child's role model”**

# Other ideas

There are times when nothing you try seems to work. It can be really hard to cope when everything seems to be spiralling out of control. Here are some other ways you and your child can get the time and space to sort things out.

- Very young children may only need to be distracted from the issue. You could try showing



them a toy and getting them interested in it. Or you could sit them on your knee, give them a big hug and tell them a quiet little story or sing a song.

- Plan ahead and have some special distractions for when children are tired or fed up.

Notice what your child is interested in so it is easy to distract them when you need to.

- Sometimes everything feels out of control because you are tired and stressed. Try going into another room and sitting quietly to calm yourself. Sometimes just walking over and looking out a window, or counting to ten before you respond can calm down a crisis. Taking several deep breaths can help too.

**“If we are travelling long distances by car, we take turns at rotating seating when everyone starts getting cranky”**

**“They need a cuddle every morning”**

A calm chat with your child can work wonders. Choose somewhere comfortable where you can spend some uninterrupted time with your child. Talk quietly with them about what has happened and what the consequences will be if the behaviour continues.

Explain how their behaviour is affecting others – for example that taking other children's toys upsets them because they have nothing to play with: "If you keep taking the toys from other kids, we'll have to go home."

Listen to your child's ideas about how the situation could be sorted out. Make sure you reach an understanding about what's going to happen and that you follow through.



**“Provide lots of praise for good behaviour, so that you praise more than you say no”**

## **If nothing seems to work**

As a last resort, to stop unwanted behaviour like hitting, biting or kicking you could use time out. Time out should not be used with children under two.

### **Time out**

Time out aims to make sure your child stops getting attention for a short time. Before you use time out, explain to your child what it will be used for and agree on the place where it will be.

Time out doesn't have to mean taking your child to a separate room. Try and choose an area that is uninteresting, but also not scary or isolating, like a chair, step, or corner of a room. With some older children you could put them in a separate room, but make sure that it is a safe place that is not frightening for them.

**“I say ‘Mummy’s busy, these are the things you can help me with’”**

- Warn your child that their behaviour is wrong and that you will put them in time out if it doesn't stop. If they stop give them lots of praise.
- If the behaviour doesn't stop, calmly take them to a safe place where you can leave them for a short time. One minute for each year of a child's age is a rough guide and no more than five minutes.
- Stay calm. Don't talk to your child or give them any other attention. If they try to leave the time out area before time is up calmly take them back. Repeat as necessary.

**“We don't use it very often. I think this is why it works. Our child hates to be removed and without attention”**

- As soon as time is up, explain what happened. Make sure you notice their good behaviour and give them lots of praise.





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Skip supports parents and caregivers  
to raise their children in a positive way.

For more information go to:

**[www.skip.org.nz](http://www.skip.org.nz)**

Email: **[info@skip.org.nz](mailto:info@skip.org.nz)**

or phone: **04 916 3385**

For more information on support for parents go to

**[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)**

and click on Family Services Directory.



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