

Time-Out for Children

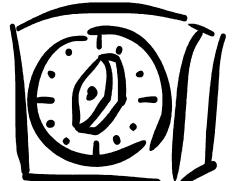


Time-out as a consequence for misbehavior works best with children between the ages of about 2 and 6 years old. Younger children (under 2 years) may not understand the relationship between their behavior and being sent to time-out. Older children usually respond better to other techniques like removing privileges.

- *Time-out is only effective if the child wants to be in the situation that you're removing them from. (Ex. James is playing and his mother tells him that it's time to clean up. James starts screaming and throwing his toys. This would not be an appropriate time to use the time-out technique because putting James in time-out means that he gets to escape from cleaning up at that time. He may still have to clean his toys up later but putting him in time-out allows him to escape initially, which is what he wants.)*

10 Steps to Make Time-Out Work:

- 1.) **Approach it the right way.** Time-out should be saved for when your child is behaving badly. Use a stern, firm, controlled voice with no emotion. Tell them what they did wrong using the least amount of words possible. (Ex. "No biting.").
- 2.) **Set expectations in advance.** Decide what behaviors your child participates in that you would like to stop. Have a few simple RULES and explain them to the child in advance. Then explain that they will be put in time-out for this behavior and what time-out consists of, including time limits, places and behaviors allowed in time-out. (Ex. "You're going to sit quietly, with your hands in your lap.")
- 3.) **Set the environment.** Time-out can be anywhere as long as the child is not in a place where they will enjoy the time-out. Try not to use places where the child has toys or games, such as their bedroom. Do not use the bathroom as there are a lot of hazards in the bathroom that can be harmful to your child.
- 4.) **Set the time.** Use your child's age as the maximum amount of minutes your child should be in time-out. A four year old should be in time-out no longer than four minutes. If the child is in time-out for too long they will not remember why they're in time-out. It might be helpful to use a kitchen timer to set the time so that your child knows the timing is fair.
- 5.) **Be consistent and quick.** Time-out is only effective if you use it every time the child participates in the problem behavior. Ignore their pleas, promises, and tantrums. Also, make sure you're catching your child right away and dealing with the situation in a timely manner.





6.) Start it right. You should inform your child that time-out starts when they are sitting quietly and calmly. If they are throwing a tantrum, let them know that you will only start the timer after they calm themselves. If your child is four and his time-out is four minutes long, but he throws a tantrum for 15 minutes, he will be in time-out for the 15 minutes of his tantrum PLUS the four minutes for time-out.

7.) If your child refuses to go, or escapes... Use minimal force, such as picking the child up and putting her down in time-out, to put the child in time-out. Replace the child in the designated time-out spot without any talking if they get up. If they escape time-out then the time restarts. Don't give up!

8.) Praise. When the time-out is over, praise the child as soon as they are being appropriate. Remember, you want your child to also understand what behaviors are good and desirable. (Ex. "Thank you for sitting quietly" but say this without emotion).

9.) Follow through. If your child breaks the rule again, they must go back into time-out. Sometimes a child must experience time-out multiple times to realize that they can't get away with misbehavior and that they cannot manipulate their way around it.

10.) Set the groundwork for the future. Teach your child to take time-outs voluntarily when they feel upset or start to feel out of control. Model this behavior for your child when you are upset by telling your child, "I need to take a time-out because I'm feeling upset" and leave the situation for a few minutes.

