

DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUE	HOW TO USE IT	KEEP IN MIND
1 Redirect your child's behavior.	Distract your toddler with a toy or suggest a new activity instead of always saying "Stop" or "Don't" when he wants to play with something he shouldn't. ("Let's look at this fun book!")	This positive approach works well for children under 2, who have poor impulse control and lack the cognitive ability to understand why you're saying no. Preschoolers react well too.
2 Ignore the behavior.	Pick and choose which behaviors to ignore (whining, for example, but not hitting). This tactic can also work for meltdowns. ("When you stop screaming, we'll talk about what you want.")	Some actions, like fidgeting, are actually more annoying than harmful. If you focus on them too much, you're more likely to get caught in a power struggle or reinforce the negative behavior.
3 Praise alternative actions.	Compliment your child each and every time she opts not to engage in a problem behavior, such as grabbing. ("It was nice of you to ask Zachary if you could play with his trucks.")	Positive reinforcement is effective with kids who tend to be defiant and oppositional. Always link the praise to a specific action. ("I like the way you remembered to pick up your clothes.")
4 Provide a physical outlet.	Make sure your child has enough time and space for physical play on a regular basis. Go outdoors, spend time on a playground, or visit an indoor gym or recreation area together.	This is a good preventive tactic. Young children who aren't yet able to verbalize their feelings will benefit from finding a way to release and vent energy that might otherwise be misdirected.
5 Avoid using "you."	In front of your child, talk to someone else about how you want your child to behave. Stay calm and neutral. ("When Susie has her coat and shoes on, we'll take a ride in the car.")	This less confrontational approach lets a child save face and allows her to hear what's expected without feeling criticized. It's also a good way to smooth transitions like bedtime.
6 Give options.	Provide simple and practical choices when your child is being obstinate. ("You can wear the corduroy pants or your jeans; it's up to you.") But make sure you can live with what she chooses.	This approach helps a young child feel in control and capable of making a decision. It's especially good during the "terrible twos." One caveat: Avoid offering too many choices.
7 Request words.	Encourage your child to tell you how he feels or what he means. When you see your child hit or push a sibling or playmate, stop him and say, "Use your words to tell me what's wrong."	Some children need to be encouraged to speak rather than lash out physically when they're mad. You can start as young as 2½, but don't expect kids to always get it right until they're 3 or older.
8 Promise one-on-one time.	If you can't respond to your child's need for your attention right away (perhaps you're on the phone), say, "I can't play with you now, but I'll be able to soon. Show me you can wait."	Some kids need a lot of individual attention. With this preventive tactic, you acknowledge the request but control the frequency and time. It's also a good way to nip tantrums in the bud.
9 Encourage an airing of viewpoints.	When siblings or friends are fighting, give each child a chance to tell her side of the story. ("Tell me what happened. How did that make you feel?") Then ask, "What can we do now?"	This strategy is geared to kids with language skills (at least 2½) and is great for older children (6 and up). It allows kids to be heard and to listen. It also teaches problem-solving.
10 Teach cause and effect.	Set a consequence for your child that is age-appropriate and fits the problem behavior. ("You need to put your toys away when you are done playing. We can't leave until the room is clean.")	This works best if you state your expectations and explain the consequences of your child's misbehavior in advance. Then make sure to follow through and be consistent.

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Children ages 18-48 months needed to participate in VCLC's national Normalization Study of The Five P's by Judith S. Bloch. Free materials. Teacher stipends. Parent gifts. Contact via e-mail at fiveps@vclc.org.

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