

Behaviour

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Make It Easy for Your Child to Behave Well

- **Make your child's surroundings safe and interesting.** Children are active so make your home a safe place to play. It is better to make your home safe for learning and exploring than it is to keep saying "No." If your child gets bored, change the surroundings to keep things interesting. When you go out, take a snack and a toy or book for your child.
- **Create family routines.** Children feel more secure when the same things happen in the same order every day. It is easier for children to follow rules when an activity becomes a habit, for example rules about picking up toys. Set up a daily routine so your child gets regular meals and snacks and enough sleep. Include lots of physical activities indoors and outdoors. Your child will fall asleep more easily if you follow the same bedtime routine every night.
- **Praise and encourage your child.** Let your child know you notice when he behaves well. Praise and encouragement work best when you tell your child very clearly what you like about what he has done. This will help your child understand what you expect of him.
- **Be a good example.** Your child learns almost everything by watching what other people do. Behave in a positive way yourself so your child will know what you expect. If you want your child to be polite, make sure she hears you saying "please" and "thank you."

i When you and your child have a strong attachment, she will be more likely to follow your directions.



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Fun & Easy Activities

My Day in Pictures

- Picture charts will help your child learn your family routines. You can make them with your child. For young children, use pictures that show each step. For older ones, you can write the words too. For example, you can put together pictures for the routine of getting dressed in winter.
- First, list everything your child must wear when it is cold and snowy outside. You will need a picture of each of these items. You can draw those, cut pictures out of newspaper ads or take photos of your own child's clothes. If your child is older she can draw them or cut them out herself.
- Lay out all the pictures. Then help your child organize them in the right order. Let your child help you glue or tape your pictures onto a big piece of paper. You can put this chart on the wall near where she gets dressed to go out.
- She can have fun looking at the picture list to find out what to put on next. You can make a chart like this for any routine in your day. It will remind your child of what you expect her to do.

Follow the Leader

- Young children learn almost everything by watching the people around them and imitating what they do. They will love a game of follow-the-leader. There are many ways to play. You can make an active game by playing outdoors or in a hallway.
- Your child imitates your actions while you move in different ways. For example, you can march around a tree in the park and swing your arms. Then let your child lead you around the tree. He can move however he likes, while you follow him.
- You can play the same game more quietly too. Try this when you are on a bus or sitting in a waiting room. You move your hands in a pattern that he imitates. Then he makes up a pattern that you must copy.
- The game can be very simple with a young child. With a 5 year old, you can make longer patterns. Having fun together is a sure way to build the connections of attachment between you.



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Ways to Guide Your Child's Behaviour

- **Remember your child's age.** It is hard for very young children to control themselves, even when they know the rules. As children grow, they understand rules and can remember them better. When you choose how to guide your child's behaviour, think about what he is able to do at his age.
- **Direct attention to another activity.** When your baby wants something dangerous, try showing her another toy. Take her attention away from the dangerous object. Does your toddler want to do something that is against the rules? You can get her busy with another activity. Take her hand and say, "I want to show you something over here."
- **Offer choices.** If your child is 1½ to 2½ years old, he probably likes to say "no" a lot. Try not to ask questions that require a "yes" or "no" answer. For example, if you have to go to the store, do not say, "Do you want to go to the store now?" Instead, try, "We're going to the store now." Then right away offer a choice between two things that you can accept. "Would you like to wear your jacket or your sweater?"
- **Follow up with consequences.** Children age 3 years and older can understand the link between what they do and the results that follow. You can set consequences for their behaviour to help them learn from their mistakes. For example, if your child throws food on the floor, she must help clean it up. Be sure that any consequences are fair, realistic, safe, and right for

your child's age. Be kind and firm when your child does something she is not supposed to do. You need to follow through with the consequences you said would happen.

i No matter how well you teach your child, no child can behave the way you want all the time.



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What would happen if...

- Play a game of “What would happen if...” with your preschooler. For example, you could ask, “What would happen if we forgot your backpack?” Together, think of all the consequences of forgetting the backpack. When it is your child’s turn, he may ask, “What would happen if we met a dinosaur on the next street?!” Let your imagination run loose and have fun. Silly answers are okay.
- This game gives your preschooler practice thinking about the consequences of his actions.

A Puppet for your Pocket

- Children’s behaviour often gets worse when they are bored. They need something interesting to do. Try using a puppet to distract your child. When you change the mood, their behaviour may improve.
- You can make a simple puppet out of a sock that fits on your hand. Open your hand so your fingers are facing your thumb. Now slide your hand into the sock. To make the puppet’s mouth, bring your thumb up to meet your fingers. To make a nose, push your middle finger forward. Ask your child where to put the puppet’s eyes. You can draw the eyes with a marker pen. If your child is old enough, let her do it.
- Your puppet can be very simple. Children have a good imagination. If you want, you can sew on coloured wool for the eyes and add more wool for hair.
- Begin moving the puppet’s mouth and talking in a different voice. How long does it take for your child to start talking to the puppet instead of to you? You can carry your puppet in your pocket and bring him out at the right moment. Is your child bored waiting in line at the grocery store? When your puppet starts telling funny stories, it could turn into a fun time.



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Make Reasonable Rules

- **Know what to expect at each age.** Children behave and think in different ways as they grow. Learn what to expect at each age. This will give you a realistic idea of what your child is able to do. It can be frustrating for you and your child if you expect too much too soon.
- **Set clear rules and limits.** When your rules are clear, your child is able to understand what you expect. Tell him the reasons for your rules. Your rules need to be the same every day.
- **Give clear instructions.** Tell your child what she can do instead of what she cannot do. For example, instead of “Don’t run!” say “Walk!”. Instead of “Don’t hit the baby!” say “Touch the baby gently.” Both you and your child will be happier if you don’t have to keep saying “No!”
- **Limits grow with your child.** Your rules will change as your child gets older. For example, he may have a later bedtime, based on his age. As your child grows, involve him in setting limits.
- **Remind often.** Young children may not always think of the rules when you want them to. They make a lot of mistakes. Be patient and calmly firm.

i **Your child needs your guidance. He needs you to be consistent and patient.**



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Fun & Easy Activities

Simon says...

- This game helps children practice listening carefully and following instructions. It works best with children who are aged 4 years and older. Some 3 year olds may also enjoy it. You can play with just two people or with a whole group.
- The person who is “Simon” stands facing the others. When Simon says, “Simon says touch your cheek,” the others touch their cheek. Simon continues giving orders to do different movements. As long as he begins with “Simon says,” the others obey him. But when Simon just says, “Touch your toes,” for example, no one moves.
- With young children, it is better to play without winners and losers. If someone follows an order when they were not supposed to, just laugh and go on. Take turns being the leader.

A Soundtrack for Your Routines

- Songs are an easy way to remind children of the behaviour that you expect. Children would rather do what the song tells them to do than take orders from you. You can make up new words to a familiar tune. For example, try calling them to lunch with “If you’re hungry and you know it, come and eat.” Sing it to the tune of “If you’re happy and you know it.”
- Some children find it very stressful to move from one activity to another. A made-up song like this can help. It changes the mood and gives the signal for what will happen next. Your child will quickly learn to recognize the song. The first two notes are enough for him to understand what you expect. He may even start singing with you. Then he has the whole rest of the song to decide to do what you want him to.



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Stay Calm and Connected

- **Help your child calm down.** Children can choose better behaviour when they are calm. Sometimes they need help to calm down. Babies are often calmed by cuddling, rocking and singing. Sometimes you need to take a child away from the difficult situation. You may find it helps to take a few deep breaths with your child and let your muscles relax.
- **Listen to feelings.** Empathy means being able to understand what other people are feeling. When you try to understand your child's feelings, you show him that his feelings matter. He knows that you respect them. By understanding better the reasons for his behaviour, you build the connections between you. He feels that you care.
- **Help your child put her feelings into words.** Talk about common feelings, like happiness, sadness, fear and anger. Give your child's feelings a name. For example, you might say, "I see that you are sad." Or "I'm glad you're happy today! Did something really good happen?" Children learn how other people feel by talking about feelings. They learn empathy when their own feelings are respected and understood.
- **Accept your child's feelings.** Let your child know it is okay to be upset and angry. Other people have those feelings too. You can accept her negative feelings without accepting negative behaviour. It is okay to be angry, but it is not okay to hit other people.
- **Stay calm.** When your child breaks the rules, losing your temper will not help. Children can think more clearly when you speak calmly. Sometimes it can be very hard for a parent to be calm and reasonable. Be a good example. If you are so angry that you think you might say or do something you will be sorry for, take a moment for yourself. Be sure your child is in a safe place. Spend a few minutes alone until you feel calmer.



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Blowing Bubbles

- One of the best ways to calm down is to take slow deep breaths. This works for both adults and children. To make deep breathing fun, try blowing bubbles. Here is a recipe to make a bubble mix at home.
 1. Put about 1/2 inch (1 cm) of water in a pot or bowl.
 2. Add about 3 or 4 squirts of dishwashing detergent.
 3. Mix gently so you do not get a lot of suds.
 4. If you have it, add 1 teaspoon (5 ml) of glycerine, which can be bought at drug stores. This will make the bubbles even better.
- Bubbles can be blown through almost anything with a hole in it. You can buy a plastic bubble wand. You can also use a small funnel or a plastic cookie cutter. You can even cut a hole in the centre of a margarine lid.
- Bubble blowing takes practice. Most children can control their breath enough to blow bubbles around age 2 years. Every child is different though. It may be easier for your child to blow bubbles if you hold the wand.

Dance to the Music

- Sometimes your child needs to move to calm down. Put on some music and dance around the kitchen. Change the music to suit your mood. Do you need fast music to burn off energy? Or do you need some slow music to calm down to? Give your child a dish towel to hold. A piece of wide ribbon would work too. She can wave it around in time to the music. Join in with your child. Maybe you need to move too!

