

## Consequences

If your child misbehaves in a way that is **not** dangerous, allow **natural or logical consequences** to teach her. For example, if a three-year-old continues to throw a truck, the truck goes away. *"Toys are not for throwing. When you can remember that, you can try again."*

If the situation is dangerous (being too rough with a younger sibling), respond clearly and firmly, *"When you do this, I will have to stop you until you learn to stop yourself."*

## Respect

Establish an environment of mutual respect in your family. Respect your child's right to make judgments and never lose sight of your right for respect.

When a child's misbehaves, a parent's reflex is sometimes to "hit the roof." When you react in anger, by yelling, hitting or spanking, you are modeling disrespectful behavior and undesirable ways to resolve conflict.

When you feel the urge to respond in anger, STOP ... take a deep breath ... calm yourself. Then ... deal with the situation calmly and reasonably.

When punishments stop, everyone's dignity and self-respect remains intact.



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Artwork by Michael Owen Design (and his son, Brandon)



**THE PARENTING NETWORK**

## Discipline and Guidance

For the Early Years (to Age 5)



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# Discipline and Guidance

**D**iscipline means different things to different people. The ideas in this brochure were designed to give you options as you guide your child toward adulthood.

**Discipline is about teaching your children acceptable ways of expressing their needs and desires.**

As your children's first teacher, you set limits to help children learn self-control and how to get along with others. Discipline is best taught by example.

As you bond with your children, you will learn their natural patterns and temperament. Keeping their needs in mind, provide **comfortable routines** and **predictable schedules** that grow and change as your children develop.

For children under one year of age, **limits are established through routines** (a regular feeding schedule, predictable bedtimes and lots of loving interactions.)

As young children begin to crawl and explore, they are continuously learning through touch. You are setting limits when you:

- **“child-proof” the environment** and remove items that are very precious or unsafe
- put gates across the doorways of rooms and install cupboard latches and doorknob covers to provide safety and protection.

**Children under nine months of age cannot be “spoiled.”** They

do not yet have the ability to manipulate. When a child cries to be held, he needs to be held. Developing a strong bond with your child is vital for the years to come.



At this very early age, children are learning to **trust**. *If I cry, I will get fed.* When needs are appropriately met, children are more content and behavior is more reasonable.

Children usually begin **“testing limits”** between 9-12 months.

**Young children learn to behave by imitating.** Demonstrate the behaviors you want them to learn. *“We don't hit. Touch my face gently, like this.”*

**Distract and redirect** young children from things you don't want them to do. Dance to some favorite music or build a tall stack of blocks to knock down.

Around 18 months, children begin to **assert their independence**. Their behavior is sometimes centered around “wants” instead of “needs.” No parent can (or should) fulfill all the “wants.” However, you can help your child feel independent by **giving either/or choices**: *“Do you want milk or juice?”*

**Giving choices** helps the child feel invested in that choice and results in a more cooperative child. As your child gets

older, give more opportunities to choose, but only choices you wish to offer.

**“No!”** is the first **power word** most children learn. When a child says “no,” she is trying out a word she learned from you. Avoid power struggles and be mindful not to overuse the word yourself.



## Alternatives to Punishment

**H**ere are some ideas parents have found useful.

- **Give your child information:** *“We don't eat cookies before dinner.”*
- **Ask for her ideas:** *“Where is a safe place to bounce this ball?”*
- **Make suggestions:** *“We can eat dessert after we eat our ‘growing’ food.”*
- **Give him a choice:** *“Would you like apple slices or orange slices for snack?”*
- **Give her a job** and redirect her energy.
- **State the “but:”** *“You want to play with the car, but Jared has it right now. You can play with the boat or the truck.”*
- **Find solutions for next time:** *“We don't use markers on the wall. Let's put paper with your markers for the next time you want to draw.”*
- **Discuss consequences:** If your child continues to write on walls, tables, etc., you may decide to remove crayons and markers until she understands this limit.