

How to Use Time-Outs

✓ **Time-outs shouldn't be a surprise.** When your child misbehaves, give one warning before sending them to time-out. However, if your child knowingly breaks a rule you've already discussed, the time-out may be given without a warning.

✓ **Briefly explain the reason for the time-out.** It's normal for children to "zone out" during long lectures, so keep your explanation to two or three sentences. Always use a calm tone, and avoid getting into arguments.

✓ **Don't make empty threats.** If you give a warning or a time-out, you *must* follow through. Be careful not to dig yourself into a hole by threatening a time-out you won't enforce.

✓ **Time-outs should happen immediately (or as soon as possible).** This allows your child to better connect the unwanted behavior to the time-out. The longer between a behavior and a consequence, the less effective it will be.

✓ **Use a designated time-out spot that is free of distractions.** "Go to your room" might be music to a child's ears. Bedrooms—where kids have toys and games—tend to be one of the worst time-out spots. Instead, use a neutral area without distractions.

✓ **Don't give your child attention during time-outs.** You may monitor your child, but avoid giving any additional attention (including negative attention). If your child leaves the time-out spot, calmly walk them back without talking or making eye contact.

✓ **Time-outs last for one minute per year of age.** Once your child is seated calmly, set a timer and place it where they can see it. If your child acts up during a time-out, instead of adding more time, pause the timer and resume once they've calmed down.

✓ **Once a time-out is over, it's over.** If you still feel frustrated about your child's behavior after they've completed a time-out, be careful not to take it out on them. This means no lecturing or other ongoing consequences following the time-out.

✓ **Balance time-outs with positive attention.** Time-outs are most effective when there are plenty of good parent-child interactions, too. Spend quality time with your child, notice when your child is behaving well, and praise their good behavior.