

Basic Home Behavior Management

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State the Rules

All children need and want boundaries and limits. Rules exist even though they may not be spoken or written. Try to state your rules in positive terms – “Keep your hands and feet to yourself.” Have a few reasonable rules. Be consistent in using and enforcing rules. It is important to call attention to rules even when your child is following them. Don’t wait until your child has violated them.

❖ ***K.I.S.S. (Keep it Short and Simple)***

Make the World Predictable

Develop routines and write out a daily schedule. Homework, TV, school, play, baths and meals should all be written down. Scheduling helps children (and adults) to gauge time, organize activities, and prioritize in terms of importance. Schedules provide a visual cue of when things will happen and imply an agreement of when it is time to stop one activity and move on to another. This decreases arguing. Reinforce adherence to the schedule. Use the calendar, lists, and timers to help structure time and activities. Timers help decrease parental nagging and reminding.

❖ ***Set the Stage for Success***

When Behavior is Appropriate, Praise it

Focus on the many positive behaviors that your child exhibits. When you enter a room, ask yourself “What is going right?” Make specific, positive comments. For example, notice when your child responds to directions the first time you give them. Even if the child does it because it is something he wants to do, it still merits special attention. This will help your child to notice the exact behavior(s) that you want him to demonstrate. If a task has been partially completed, comment positively on the completed part first. When you notice things that a child does right, it breaks the cycle of negative redirection (nagging) and makes him feel better about himself and you. Increase the amount of nonverbal praise. Give lots of warm smiles, pats, and thumbs up. Your attention is something your child needs, use it at the right time. Provide extra praise for behaviors that you want to increase.

❖ ***Catch the child being good***

When Behavior is Inappropriate, ignore it

For a child, negative attention is better than no attention at all. Attention reinforces behavior. Before you look at, speak to, or touch the child, ask yourself. “Do I want the behavior my child is not engaging in to increase?” If not, ignore it! Turn your attention to other matters or other children (siblings) who are behaving appropriately. If the behavior is not dangerous or destructive and you can ignore it, you should do so. When you refuse to give attention to undesirable behavior, a child must do something else to get your attention. Quickly give positive attention to more appropriate behaviors. Be aware that when you begin to ignore a problem behavior, it may increase rather than decrease at first. Be firm and consistent.

❖ ***If there is no audience, the show will close***

When Giving Directions, State Them Clearly

Do not phrase directions as questions when you mean them as directions. For Example, don’t ask “Are you ready for bed when it is bedtime. Instead say, “John, it is time for bed.” Get the child’s attention, give the direction, and reinforce compliance. Some children need help stopping and shifting activities. Use timers and verbal reminders to structure transitions. “Five more minutes, then it is time to clean up.” Whenever possible, give a choice between two acceptable options, but your child should know when he has a choice and when he has no option. State expectations clearly. “Straighten up your bedroom” leaves room for debate.

❖ ***Say what you mean***

Never Give a Direction Unless you are Ready to Enforce it

Reserve directions for important situations when you are prepared to follow through. If you don't feel like getting up to check, don't tell your child to put away his toys. When you are concerned about inconsistency, ask yourself exactly what message you want to convey. It is ok to leave the toys out or it is okay not to listen to your directions.

❖ *Mean what you say*

Focus on One or Two Behaviors and be Consistent

Pick one or two behaviors to work on and respond consistently. This way your child will learn what to expect and, in turn, he will behave more consistently. Try to discuss specific behaviors with your spouse and agree on specific responses/consequences. A consensus improves consistency. Writing it down is helpful. Try to have others provide the same structure. This increases the rate of learning- there is less testing behavior and it decreases the likelihood that the new skill will be person specific.

❖ *Pick your battles to win the war*

Understand the Limitations of Punishment

Punishment procedures, such as time-out, only interrupt behavior but do not teach an alternative behavior. If punishment procedure is used, be sure to deliver the punishment in a matter-of-fact manner, deliver it immediately, and every time the behavior occurs. Effective punishments entail a warning, have a set beginning, and a set end. Reinforce incompatible behaviors and positive alternative behaviors. In a pinch, ask the child what the punishment should be.

❖ *Teach them what to do as well as what not to do*

Ask a Question

When all else fails and redirection is necessary, ask your child a question such as "What guideline applies to that situation." Reinforce his/her ability to repeat the rule. This is less judgmental, provides an opportunity for the child to be reinforced, and redirects a negative interaction into an exchange of information. Be calm. Try writing down the child's responses. Build on what was said. Encourage problem solving.

❖ *A Statement provokes a defense, a question evokes a response*

Model Appropriate Behavior

Demonstrate the behaviors you want your child to display. Model the target behaviors then encourage your child to imitate you. Pretend to do it wrong and let the child correct you. It is easier to remember new behavior if there is a visual image and a chance for supervised, positive practice.

❖ *A picture is worth...*

Behavior Training - Rules and Discipline Basics

Definition

- Children come into this world impulsive and undisciplined. When they start to walk, they begin to get into trouble. They do not develop much self-control until 3 years of age. They need to be taught safe and socially acceptable behavior.
- They need "behavior training" to learn good from bad behavior. They need universal rules and limit-setting to keep them from becoming a "spoiled" child.
- It's the parent's job to set limits. It's the child's job to object to and test them.
- "To discipline" means "to teach." It means giving constructive feedback. It does not mean "to punish." You will be your child's teacher and coach for many years. It's an important part of a parent's job.
- Age: Most of this information is about children less than 5 years old: toddlers and preschoolers.

Health Information

How to Use this Parent Handout on Behavior Training:

- If your child has several discipline problems or is out of control, go to the section: *Behavior Training: How to Design a Plan for Your Child*.
- If you mainly want to learn about Rules, go to the section: *Rules: Guidelines for How to Create and Use Them*.
- If you mainly want to learn about Consequences (Negative Feedback), go to the separate handout: **Behavior Training: Consequences**. It contains the following 2 sections: *Consequences: Menu of Options* and *Consequences: Guidelines for How to Give*.
- Don't overlook the last section: *Positive Feedback for Desired Behavior: Guidelines for How to Give*.

What to Expect

- Any inappropriate behavior can be changed. In young children, most single problem behaviors will improve in 2 to 4 weeks with a targeted plan.
- Behavior training (discipline techniques) gradually changes a self-centered toddler into a mature teen who is thoughtful and respectful of others, assertive without being aggressive, and in control of his or her impulses.

Care Advice

Behavior Training: How to Design a Plan for Your Child

1. List Your Child's Problem Behaviors (Misbehaviors):

- What do you want to change?
- Over the next 3 days, observe your child carefully. Write down your child's most inappropriate or annoying behaviors. We will call these his misbehaviors. You may sometimes call them his bad behaviors.

2. **Set Priorities for the Misbehaviors You Want to Correct First:**
 - Some misbehavior needs immediate attention (such as behavior that might harm your child or others).
 - The first goal of discipline is to protect your child from danger (safety training).
 - The second goal is to protect others. (no aggression training).
 - The third goal is to address behaviors that are too disruptive to be ignored (such as, refusing to go to bed).
 - Some families with a child who is out of control have too many rules. Setting priorities and letting go of the small stuff is important here.
3. **Write House Rules for the Most Important Kinds of Misbehavior:**
 - For help, see the section titled *Rules: Guidelines for How to Create Them*.
 - Choose your rules (limits) carefully. They should be important and non-negotiable.
4. **Decide What Consequence You Will Use for Each Rule If Broken:**
 - All behavior, good and bad, is mainly changed (or shaped) by consequences. If the consequence is pleasant (getting what they want or a reward), the child is more likely to repeat that behavior. If the consequence is unpleasant (negative feedback or a punishment), the child is less likely to do the same thing again.
 - Young children do not respond to lectures or reminders. Actions speak louder than words. The most effective actions are ignoring harmless misbehavior, redirecting the child to appropriate behavior, or giving your child a time-out.
 - For help, see the separate handoutm Behavior Training: Consequences.
5. **Stop Any Yelling:**
 - Yelling teaches your child to yell back. Yelling matches also can escalate into a verbal battle (called playing "uproar"). We know the emotional brain turns on fast and the thinking brain takes a bit longer. So if you start to yell, try to stop until you gain control of your emotions.
 - Your child will respond better to a calm voice and an appropriate consequence. The adult has to downshift first.
6. **Stop Any Physical Punishment:**
 - Most out-of-control children are already too aggressive.
 - Physical punishment (such as slapping the hand or spanking) teaches them that it's okay to be aggressive (such as hit or attack someone) to solve problems.
7. **Try to Avoid Public Places Until Misbehavior is Under Control at Home:**
 - Misbehaving children are usually more difficult to control in a shopping mall or supermarket than at home. Leave your child with a sitter or partner when you need to go to these places.
8. **Try to Take Daily Breaks from Your Child:**
 - Tell your partner when you need a break from supervising your young child. Ask then to take over all behavior training for a few hours.
 - If this is impossible, hire a teenager a few times a week to look after your child while you go out.
 - Also make a "date" for a weekly night out with your partner or a friend.
9. **Give Your Child More Positive Feedback:**
 - Children want to please and respond to discipline best when they feel loved. Every child needs lots of daily praise, smiles, and hugs.
 - Give your child this increased attention when he or she is not demanding it. Try hard to notice the times when your child is being good. If your child receives more negative criticism each day than positive responses, you need to restore a healthy emotional balance. It comes back to setting priorities. Have less rules, less criticism and more praise. Many experts feel that it takes 10 positive interactions to counter one negative interaction.
 - For help, see the section titled *Positive Feedback for Desired Behavior: Guidelines for How to Give*.

10. **Protect Your Child's Self-Esteem:**

- Remember that you are trying to change a bad behavior, but in a good child. Your child needs to know that he's a "great kid" and that you love him dearly.
- Don't discuss your child's behavior problems with other people when your child is around.
- Correct your child in a kind way. Sometimes begin your correction with "I'm sorry I can't let you..."
- Don't label your child a "bad boy."
- After any punishment is over, welcome your child back into the family circle. Give him a clean slate.

Rules: Guidelines for How to Create and Use Them

1. **Begin Behavior Training at about 12 Months of Age**

- The first year is mainly about nurturing and protecting your baby.
- The earliest rules are for your child's safety.
- When children start to crawl, they may need an occasional No.
- When they start to walk, limits are always needed.

2. **State Each Unacceptable Behavior as a Clear and Brief Rule:**

- The younger the child, the more concrete the rule must be. Examples of clear rules are: "No pinching", "No throwing toys" and "No running".
- When possible, give a brief reason for the rule: "Hitting hurts" or "Your toy can break".

3. **State the Acceptable and Desired Behavior:**

- Your child needs to know what is expected of him or her. Examples are: "Play with your brother," "Look at books when I'm on the telephone," or "Walk, don't run."
- When praising any good behavior, make it specific. For example, "Thank you for being quiet."

4. **Ignore Harmless Misbehavior:**

- The more rules you have, the less likely your child will obey them. Constant criticism doesn't work.
- Ignore unimportant behavior such as giving bad looks, not sitting still, poor table manners, backtalk, or interrupting people. These are near normal during the early years.

5. **Use Rules that are Fair and Attainable:**

- Rules must fit your child's age.
- A child should not be punished for clumsiness when he or she is learning to walk. Same for poor enunciation when the child is learning to speak. In addition, a child should not be punished for behavior that is part of normal emotional development, such as thumb-sucking, fears of being separated from their parents, and toilet training accidents.

6. **Concentrate on Two or Three Rules at the Start:**

- Give highest priority to issues of safety, such as not running into the street.
- Next, address preventing harm to others.
- Then, address behavior that damages property.
- Only then go to all the annoying misbehaviors that wear you down.

7. **Avoid Trying to Change "No-Win" Power Struggles Through More Pressure:**

- "No-win behavior" is behavior that usually cannot be controlled by the parent if the child decides to continue it. Examples are wetting pants, hair pulling, thumb sucking, body rocking, masturbation, not eating enough, not going to sleep, and refusal to complete schoolwork.
- The first step in resolving such a power struggle is to withdraw from the conflict and stop punishing your child for the misbehavior.
- Then switch to positive feedback and incentives, when he behaves as you'd like.
- For help, see the section titled *Positive Feedback for Desired Behavior: Guidelines for How to Give*.

8. **Apply Your Rules Consistently:**

- After parents agree on the rules, it's helpful to write them down. Then post them in a conspicuous place in the home to remind you of your game plan.

Positive Feedback for Desired Behavior: Guidelines for How to Give

1. **Give Your Child Lots of Hugs When Being Good:**

- Some parents don't give enough verbal approval and physical affection (hugs and human touch).
- Don't take good behavior for granted. Watch for behavior you like, then praise your child by saying such things as "I like the way you..." or "I appreciate..." When you say this, move close to your child, get eye contact, smile, and be affectionate.
- A parent's affection and attention is the favorite reward of most children.

2. **Social Reinforcers for Good Behavior:**

- There are two kinds of positive reinforcers; social and material.
- Social reinforcers, such as praise, are used to encourage desired behavior. Praise the behavior, not the person.
- Preface your praise with "Good job, I'm so proud of the way you". Examples are sharing toys, taking turns, being kind, doing chores, making the baby laugh, petting the dog gently, being a good sport, cleaning up, or reading a book.
- Your child can also be praised for trying. Examples are trying to use the potty or attempting something difficult, like a puzzle.
- Praise will make your child want to behave appropriately more often. Try to "catch your child being good".

3. **Material Reinforcers for Good Behavior:**

- Material reinforcers (incentives) are often candy, animal crackers, money, or video-time.
- Incentives often need to be added to overcome resistance when children are entrenched in a power struggle around a "no-win" behavior. Examples are deliberately wetting or soiling their pants.
- Incentives should be used for one problem behavior at a time and when praise alone has failed.
- They should be phased out and replaced by natural (social) reinforcers as soon as possible.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child's misbehavior is dangerous
- Your child is also having behavior problems at preschool
- Your child can't keep friends
- Parents can't agree on behavior training plan (your rules and consequences)
- Parent can't give up physical punishment
- Misbehavior is not improved after using this plan for 4 weeks
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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Time-Out Technique

Definition

- Time-out means putting a child in a boring place for a few minutes to correct a misbehavior.
- It's the most effective consequence (discipline technique) for misbehavior in 2- to 5-year-old children. Every parent needs to know how to give a time-out.
- Time-out teaches a child to stop and think. It provides time to calm down and regain control of the emotions. Sometimes, it also helps the parent calm down.
- Time-out is also called quiet time, thinking time, or cooling-off time.

Health Information

When to Give a Time-Out

- Time-out is most useful for aggressive, harmful, or any disruptive behavior that cannot be ignored.
- Time-out is not needed for most temper tantrums.
- Time-out is the most effective consequence for toddlers and preschoolers who misbehave. It's much better than threatening, shouting, or spanking
- The peak ages for using time-out are 2 to 5 years. During these years, children respond to actions much better than words. Time-out is not ever needed before a child can walk. Time-out is rarely needed for children younger than 18 months because they usually respond to verbal disapproval (a simple "No").

What to Expect

- If you use time-out repeatedly, consistently, and correctly, your child will eventually improve. It can change almost any childhood behavior.

Care Advice

How to Give Time-Outs

- 1. Teach Your Child What a Time-Out Is:**
 - If you have not used time-out before, go over it with your child.
 - Review the kinds of bad behavior that require a time-out. Also, review the good behavior that you would prefer.
 - Tell your child it will replace yelling and spanking, if you have used those techniques.
 - Then do a practice run. Pretend with your child that he has broken one of the rules. Take him through the steps of time-out so he will understand what to do when he needs a time-out in the future.
- 2. Time-Out Chair:**
 - Pick a chair for time-outs. The chair should be in a boring location, facing a blank wall or a corner.
 - Don't allow your child to take anything with him to time-out, such as a stuffed animal or security blanket. Your child shouldn't be able to see TV or other people from the location.
 - A good chair is a heavy one with side arms. The special chair can also be named after the misbehavior you are trying to stop: such as your hitting chair or screaming chair.
 - Alternatives to chairs are standing in a particular corner or sitting on the lower step of a stairway.
 - If you are in the same room as your child, carefully avoid making eye contact.

3. **Time-Out Room:**
 - Children who refuse to stay in a time-out chair need to be sent to a time-out room. Keeping a child in a room is easier to enforce.
 - The room should be one that is safe for the child. The child's bedroom is often the most convenient one. Although toys are available in the bedroom, most children do not initially play with them because they are upset about being excluded from mainstream activities.
 - Caution: Avoid any room that is dark or scary (such as some basements), contains hot water (bathrooms), or has filing cabinets or bookshelves that could be pulled down on the child.
4. **Send Your Child to Time-Out:**
 - You ask your child to stop doing something, and they do not. You tell them again, and they do not comply.
 - Stop talking and state "you need a time-out". If your child doesn't go to time-out within 5 seconds, take him there. Younger children often need to be led there by their hand. In some cases, they may need to be carried there protesting. Older children will usually go to time-out on their own.
 - Take him to time-out without talking. Or you can tell your child what he did wrong in one sentence (such as, "No hitting"). Sometimes also clarify the preferred behavior (such as, "Be kind to Zoe"). These brief comments give your child something to think about during the time-out.
5. **Decide the Length of Time-Out:**
 - Time-out should be brief so your child can easily comply. A good rule of thumb is 1 minute per year of age (with an upper limit of 5 minutes). There's no evidence that timeouts longer than this work any better.
 - After age 6, most children can be told they must take a time-out "until you can behave" or "until you calm down." This allows the child to recover quickly if they are able.
 - Setting a portable kitchen timer for the required number of minutes can be helpful. The best type rings when the time is up. A timer can stop a child from asking the parents when he can come out.
6. **Quiet Behavior in Time-Out: Required or Not?**
 - The minimum requirement for time-out completion is that your child does not leave the chair or time-out place until the time-out is over. If your child leaves ahead of time, return them and reset the timer.
 - Some parents do not consider a time-out to be completed unless the child has been quiet for the entire time. Until 4 years of age, many children are unwilling or unable to stay quiet. Ignore tantrums in time-out, just as you would ignore tantrums outside of time-out. After age 4, quiet time is preferred but not required. If you wish, you can tell your child, "Time-out is for thinking, and to think need to be quiet. If you yell or complain, the time will start over."
7. **Release Your Child from Time-Out:**
 - To be released, your child must have performed a successful time-out. This means he stayed in time-out for the required number of minutes.
 - Your child can leave time-out when the timer rings. If you don't have a timer, he can leave when you tell him, "Time-out is over. You can get up now."
 - A few children may need to start with shorter timeouts. Even so, you have to stay in charge of when the timeout is over.

Special Time-Out Problems

1. **Younger Child Who Refuses to Stay in Time-Out:**
 - In general, if a child escapes from time-out (gets up from the chair), you should quickly take the child back to time-out and reset the timer. This approach works for most children.
 - Some strong-willed toddlers initially need to be held in time-out. Holding your child in time-out teaches your child that you mean what you say and that he must comply. Place your child in the time-out chair again and hold him by the shoulders from behind. Tell your child that you will stop holding him when he stops trying to escape.
 - Then avoid eye contact and any talking. Pretend that you don't mind doing this and are thinking of something else.
 - When the time is up, tell your child "that was a good time-out" whether it was or not. Your child will usually stop trying to escape after a week of this holding approach.
2. **Younger Child Who Won't Sit in the Time-Out Chair:**
 - A last resort for young children who continue to resist sitting in a chair is putting them in the bedroom with a strong gate blocking the door.
 - Occasionally, a parent with carpentry skills can install a half-door.
 - If you cannot devise a barricade, some children will need you to close the door. When you do say, "I'm sorry I have to close the door. I'll open it when you promise to stay in your room for your time-out." Hold the door closed for the 3 to 5 minutes it takes to complete the time-out period. Most children need their door closed only a few times.
3. **Older Child Who Refuses to Stay in Time-Out:**
 - An older child can be defined in this context as one who is too strong for the parent to hold in a time-out chair. In general, any child older than 5 years who does not take time-out quickly should be considered a "refuser".
 - Time-out always needs a backup plan.
 - Change the consequence to one that matters to your child. If 5 minutes pass without your child going to time-out, take away a privilege or possession. Tell your child that they just lost TV, video games, a favorite toy, outside play or visits with friends until they take their time-out. That can mean for the rest of that day. After giving the consequence, walk away and no longer discuss it.
4. **Time-Out Away from Home:**
 - Time-out can be effectively used in any setting.
 - In a supermarket, younger children can be put back in the grocery cart. Older children may need to stand in a corner.
 - In shopping malls, children can take their time-out sitting on a bench or in a restroom.
 - Sometimes a child needs to be taken to the car and made to sit there with supervision.
 - If the child is outdoors and misbehaves, you can ask him to stand facing a tree.

When Time-Outs are Not Working: What to Do

1. **Don't Give Up on Using Time-Outs:**
 - Some children repeat their misbehavior immediately after release from time-out. Others seem to improve but by the next day are back at it. Some children refuse to go to time-out or won't stay there. None of these examples means that time-out should be abandoned.
 - It remains the most powerful discipline technique for 2- to 5-year-old children.
 - The following recommendations may help you fine-tune how you are using time-out.

2. **Give Your Child More Physical Affection Each Day:**
 - Be sure your child receives several time-ins for each time-out. A time-in is a brief caring human interaction.
 - Try to restore the positive side of your relationship with your child. Catch him being good. Give your child a hug many times a day. For younger children, hold them closely for a few minutes many times a day. Play with your child more.
 - Children who are overly criticized can feel that they are no longer loved. Then they no longer want to please you.
3. **Use Time-Out Only For The One Worst Behavior You Are Trying to Change:**
 - Pick your one main "problem behavior" and concentrate on that. Use your time-out consequence only for that target behavior.
4. **Don't Threaten to Give a Time-Out, Just Do It:**
 - See the popular book "1-2-3 Magic" by psychologist Thomas Phelan PhD. He uses a slow 3-count prior to requiring the time-out. This 3-warning approach helps many children accept the requested change and avoid the time-out.
 - The main point is don't give repeated warnings. If you tell your child to stop doing something and they don't, give them a time-out. No discussion.
5. **Put Your Child in Time-Out Quickly:**
 - Don't argue about it with your child.
 - When your child breaks a rule, have her in time-out within 10 seconds.
6. **Be Gentle When Moving Your Child to Time-Out:**
 - This will help reduce your child's anger.
 - Say you're sorry he needs a time-out, but be firm about it.
 - Try to handle your child gently if you have to carry him to time-out.
7. **Give Your Child a Choice About How He Takes His Time-Out:**
 - Ask, "Do you want to take a time-out by yourself or do you want me to hold you in your chair? It doesn't matter to me." Also known as the easy way or the hard way.
8. **Don't Talk to Your Child During Time-Out:**
 - Don't answer his questions or complaints. Don't try to lecture your child.
9. **Ignore Tantrums in Time-Out:**
 - Don't insist on quietness during time-out. Reason: Makes it harder to finish the time-out and move on.
10. **Return Your Child to Time-Out if He Escapes:**
 - Have a back-up plan.
 - For example, you can hold a young child in the time-out chair, or ground an older child.
 - See detailed discussion under Special Time-Out Problems.
11. **Use a Portable Timer for Keeping Track of the Time:**
 - Your child is more likely to obey a timer than to obey you.
 - A timer can be very helpful for toddlers.
12. **Allow Your Child to Come out of Time-Out as soon as Feels Calmer:**
 - Give your child the option to regain self-control on their terms rather than taking the specified number of minutes. This helps strong-willed children.
13. **Praise Your Child for Taking a "Good" Time-Out:**
 - Forgive your child completely when you release him from time-out.
 - Don't give lectures or ask for an apology.
 - Give your child a clean slate and don't tell your partner how many time-outs he needed that day.

14. Use Different Consequences for Different Misbehaviors:

- Ignore harmless behaviors.
- Use distraction for bad habits.
- Use logical consequences -- such as removal of toys, other possessions, or privileges -- for some misbehavior.

15. Clarify With Your Child What You Want Him To Do:

- Clarify the important house rules.
- Memory requires repetition. Review rules at a time when your child is in a good mood.
- This will help him be more successful in the future.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child has many behavioral problems and is out of control
- Your child refuses to stay in time-out after using this plan for 1 week
- Your child's misbehavior has not improved after using this plan for 4 weeks
- You have other questions or concerns

Pediatric Care Advice

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Toilet Training - Normal

Definition

Your goal is to toilet train your child. Your child will be toilet trained when without reminders they can:

- Walk to the potty
- Pull down their pants
- Pass urine or a bowel movement (BM) into the potty
- Pull up their pants.
- This handout discusses a gradual type of toilet training.

Health Information

Bladder and Bowel Control

- Some children will learn to control their bladder first. Others will start with bowel control. Both kinds of control can be worked on at the same time.
- Bedwetting is different. Bladder control through the night normally happens several years later than daytime bladder control.
- Most toilet training can be completed in 1 to 2 months. However, your child needs to be ready before you start.

Toilet Readiness Training

- Don't begin toilet training (prompted potty sits) until your child is clearly ready. Readiness doesn't just happen.
- Toilet readiness training means teaching your child about pee, poop and use of the potty (and toilets). This special teaching can start at 18 months of age or earlier.
- Details on how to help children become ready are found in the handout, "Toilet Readiness Training".

How to Know if Your Child is Ready to Start Real Toilet Training

- Your child knows the sensation of a full bladder and full rectum. Hiding to go pee or poop proves they recognize this urge and can wait briefly.
- Can go 2 or more hours without passing urine. Waking dry from naps is a good sign.
- Poops are formed and passed 3 or less times per day.
- Comes to you to be changed to a clean diaper.
- Your child knows what the toilet and potty chair are used for.
- Your child likes to sit on the potty chair.
- Your child likes to please you and is cooperative with most verbal requests.

Care Advice

1. **Start Practice Runs to the Potty:**
 - A practice run (potty sit) is encouraging your child to sit on their potty chair with their diapers off.
 - Only do practice runs when your child gives a signal that looks promising. Such signals are a certain facial expression, holding the genital area, or pulling at their pants. You may notice pacing, squatting, dancing in place or even grunting.
 - If you don't see any signals, other good times for practice runs are after naps or 2 hours without passing urine. You can also try 20 or 30 minutes after meals or a big drink. Tell your child, "Your poop (or pee) wants to come out. Let's sit on the potty".
 - How often: Try to limit practice sits to no more than 5 times per day. Too many reminders turns some children against the process. Having a limit also will help you be better at figuring out the best times and signals.
2. **Make Practice Runs Positive for the Child**
 - Keep them upbeat and fun.
 - If your child doesn't want to sit on the potty, let it go at that time.
 - If your child wants to get up after 1 minute of encouragement, let him get up.
 - Caution: Never force your child to sit there. Never physically hold your child there. This is the main cause of toilet training resistance.
 - Don't read to or play games with your child while sitting on the potty. That confuses the purpose of why they are there. Leave them focus only on making their body do its job.
 - Even if your child seems to be enjoying it, end each session by 5 minutes.
 - This is not the time to teach proper wiping and handwashing. Be sure that any wiping is gentle. Keep the focus on releasing pee and poop into the potty.
3. **Keep a Potty Chair Close By:**
 - Initially, keep the potty chair in the room where your child usually plays.
 - This easy access increases the chances that they'll use it without you asking.
 - Consider owning 2 potty chairs, so one can be in your bathroom.
4. **Wear Clothing That is Easy to Remove:**
 - During toilet training, children need to wear only one layer of clothing. That usually means training pants or pullups.
 - Some parents find it is helpful to keep their child in diapers until they start toilet training. Switching to pullups at that time can motivate your child to keep them clean and dry. Teach them how to pull them down.
 - Avoid shoes and outer pants.
 - In the wintertime, if needed, also wear loose sweatpants.
 - After toilet training is done, avoid any pants with zippers, buttons, snaps, or a belt for a while.
5. **Praise Your Child for Cooperation and Any Success:**
 - In the beginning, praise your child's cooperation with practice sits.
 - For example, you might say, "You are sitting on the potty just like Mommy." or, "You're trying real hard to go pee-pee in the potty".
 - Eventually give praise and hugs mainly for passing urine or stool into the potty.
 - A sense of accomplishment is enough for some children. However, some need rewards to stay focused. Examples are stickers or healthy food treats.
 - Big rewards like going to a toy store for a prize should be reserved for big steps. For instance, your child has completed toilet training.
 - Caution: Overpraising can make some kids feel pressured. Keep your praise more natural and selective.

6. **Practice Runs - When to Stop Prompting:**

- Once your child starts using the potty by themselves several times in a row, you can stop practice runs.
- For the following week, continue to praise your child frequently for using the potty.
- Phase them out gradually. Prompt only when your child ignores an obvious signal.

7. **Change Your Child Calmly After Accidents:**

- Change your child as soon as it's convenient. Respond with kindness. Say, "You wanted to go pee in the potty, but you went in your pants. I know that makes you sad. You like to be dry. You'll get better at this."
- If you feel a need to express disapproval, do so rarely. For example, "Big boys don't go poop in their pants." Or mention the name of another child whom your child likes and who is trained.
- Change your child into a dry diaper or training pants in a pleasant manner.
- Try not to show your anger. Carefully avoid any physical punishment, yelling, or scolding.
- Pressure or force will start a power struggle. Your child may become completely uncooperative.

8. **Regular Underwear - When to Start:**

- Introduce regular underwear after your child starts using the potty on their own.
- Regular underwear can spark motivation.
- Switch from training pants or pullups to regular underwear after your child passes urine into the potty on their own for a whole day.
- Buy loose-fitting underwear that they can easily lower and pull up on their own.
- Once in underwear, use diapers or pullups only for sleep and long travels outside the home.

9. **What to Expect**

- Some kids are easy to train, others are harder.
- Practice runs and reminders should not be needed for more than 1 or 2 months.
- If there is no progress, your child probably needs a break for a few months.
- Facts: the average age for completing toilet training in the US is 2 years and 6 months. The average age is younger in other countries.

Call Your Doctor If

- Your child is over 2 1/2 years old and has a negative attitude about toilet training
- Your child is over 3 years old and not daytime toilet trained
- Your child won't sit on the potty chair or toilet
- Your child holds back bowel movements
- The approach described here isn't working after 3 months
- Note: See Toilet Training Resistance handout

Pediatric Care Advice

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