



# Time-Out!

*A Time for Quiet and  
Calm; A Break From  
Negative Behavior*





## What is a Time-Out?

A time-out is a break in a child's negative behavior, whether it's dangerous to the child or others, or it's a refusal to follow directions. Children as young as 18 months can be introduced to time-out.

## How Do I Use a Time-Out?

- ▶ Talk about what a time-out means and when you'll use it with the child **BEFORE** it's necessary
- ▶ Warn your child: "If you don't stop, you'll have a time-out!" Never give your child warnings unless you intend to follow through with them. Such mixed messages can be confusing to a child and may result in your child not taking your warnings seriously.
- ▶ When your child ignores the warning, have your child go to a quiet place, such as a corner of a room, and start the clock. It can be a timer in the room, on the stove, or on your cell phone.



- ▶ Explain the reason for the time-out: "You hit your sister. That's not allowed. Take some deep breaths and I will speak to you in one minute."
- ▶ A time-out area can be anywhere that is convenient for you. If you are in a public place, NEVER be far from your child or let them leave your sight. When children are very young, a time-out can occur with the child sitting quietly right beside you.
- ▶ After the time-out is over, bend or sit down at your child's level and ask if your child understands what to do the next time. Say, "Next time, play nicely with your sister." Embrace your child and express your love.



# How Long Does a Time-Out Last?

It lasts one minute for each year of age:

two-year-old ..... 2 minutes

three-year-old ..... 3 minutes

four-year-old ..... 4 minutes

five-year-old ..... 5 minutes

The above is a rough guideline. Very young or hyperactive children may not be able to complete the entire recommended time-out. More important is the effort your child makes to sit quietly and calmly. Remember; quality over quantity.

The clock should start when the child is calm or calming. If your child leaves the time-out area, return the child or have your child go back. You need to restart the timer and explain the need to stay put until the time-out is over. Remember; it is the removal of the child from the situation, not the time per se, that makes the impression. If the time out is too long, young children can forget why they're there!



When your child has completed the time-out, or when your child has demonstrated sufficient effort to complete the time-out, praise your child for sitting through the time-out and reinforce the reason for the time-out.

## When Do I Use a Time-Out?

Use a time-out when your child is acting in a way that is unsafe — physically or verbally. Be sure that your child knows what is safe and off limits ahead of time, if possible. Make sure other adults (e.g., uncle, grandmother, babysitter) use the same guidelines.



## Why Use Time-Outs?

Young children respond best to praise for good behavior. However, sometimes they need to have limits set for them. Time-outs let you do this safely and effectively!

Sometimes, children will misbehave to get your attention. A time-out teaches your child that breaking the rules or dangerous behavior is not the way to get your attention.

A time-out stops the behavior, allows your child to calm down, and — if age appropriate — think about what has just occurred.

Children copy their parents. For example, if parents spank their child for hitting a brother or sister, the child gets a mixed message: “Mommy and Daddy can hit, but I can’t.” Always remain calm and use a quiet voice.



# Time-Outs Work!

Time-outs can be difficult for both parents and their children. Keep your voice calm and if you feel yourself losing patience, give *yourself* a time-out. Never allow such set-backs in child-rearing to get the better of you. Disciplining your child takes patience and understanding, but if you are still having problems, speak with your doctor or nurse for advice.



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