



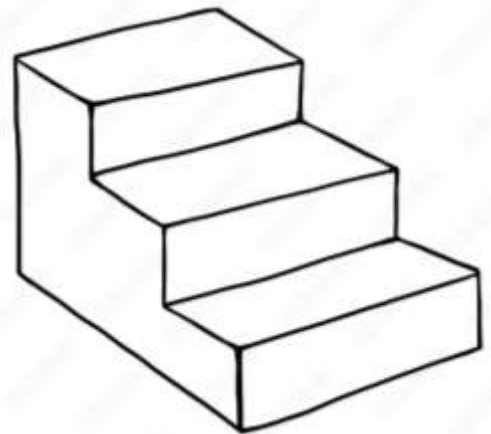
3-Step Prompting

What is 3-Step Prompting?

- 3-step prompting is a way to help your child follow instructions and learn new skills. It can be especially helpful for young children and those with learning challenges. This strategy is designed to give children a good chance to follow instructions on their own before you help them. Over time, this helps them be more independent.

How does it work?

- **Step 1: Give a simple, direct, verbal instruction.** Use just a few words to provide the instruction and try to focus on what you'd like your child *to do*, rather than what *not to do*. *Example:* "Please sit down."
 - Wait about 10 seconds. If your child does what you ask, provide enthusiastic praise. *Example:* "Good job sitting down! You're a very good listener."
 - If your child does not do what you ask after 10 seconds, move on to Step 2.
- **Step 2. Repeat the verbal instruction with a model or gesture.** Give the same instruction you did in Step 1, and at the same time *show* your child what you want them to do. *Example:* "Please sit down like me (as you are sitting down)."
 - Wait about 10 seconds. If your child does what you ask, provide enthusiastic praise, just like for Step 1.
 - If your child does not do what you ask after 10 seconds, move on to Step 3.
- **Step 3. Repeat the verbal instruction with gentle physical guidance.** Give the same instructions you did in Steps 1 and 2, and gently guide your child to the "correct" answer. Do this with the least amount of physical guidance possible. *Example:* "Please sit down (while gently lowering the child into a chair)."
 - Still provide praise, but with slightly less enthusiasm than in Steps 1 or 2. *Example:* "Yep, that's sitting down. Good job."
 - Try again! Go back to Step 1 to give your child another chance at following instructions independently.





Figuring Out Frustration

Everyone gets frustrated, angry, or upset sometimes, and young children are still learning how to handle their emotions. By using some of these tips, most children will learn how to handle difficult emotions, allowing them to become more self-reliant and confident. You can watch a video on this topic clicking this [link](#) or scanning the above QR code with your mobile device.

Steps for Building Frustration Skills

- **Stay calm (at least on the outside).** It can be difficult to feel calm when your child is upset, but if you can act calmly, it helps them know things are okay and provides a positive model.
- **Be supportive and encouraging.** Say a few words that tell your child you understand their frustration. Younger children will especially need more support labelling their own emotions.
- **Have them try again.** Once your child has calmed, encourage them to approach the frustrating situation again. This helps them learn that problems are challenges to be overcome, not obstacles that need to be avoided.
- **Praise improvements and persistence.** Any time your child handles a difficult situation, tell them how well they did! Anything you like and want to see more of should get praise.

Things to Avoid when Kids are Upset

- **Getting upset yourself.** It's natural to feel distressed when your child is upset, but showing how upset you are can make the situation worse.
- **Distracting from the problem.** Distraction can be a great tool *before* a child becomes upset if you are able to prevent it, but once they have become very upset it's better to wait until the child starts calming down naturally. This helps children learn self-soothing.
- **Asking too many questions.** When children are very upset, asking them questions feels overwhelming and can make the situation worse. Instead of asking "What's wrong?" say something like, "You're frustrated because that toy isn't working."

Prep for Success

To use these tips, it will be easiest if you've thought about what you want to do beforehand. By knowing what situations usually upset your child, how you normally react, and what you'd like to do differently, you'll be better prepared. Filling in this worksheet will help parents be ready when the time comes to use these skills

What are some situations that make your child upset?

How do you usually react in these situations?

Using the tips above, what would you like to try and do differently in the future?



Giving Great Instructions

Kids are asked to do lots of things by adults, and even the best-behaved kids don't always do as they're told. Sometimes parents think kids are disobeying on purpose, but kids are actually confused about what they should do. Parents can help kids listen by giving effective instructions. You can watch a video on this topic by clicking this [link](#) or scanning the QR code above with your mobile device.

Tips for Effective Instructions

- **Secure attention.** To make sure kids hear you when you give an instruction, get at kid level and make sure to have eye contact. This alone can improve cooperation.
- **One at a time.** Giving one task at a time makes it easier for kids to listen. Give one instruction at a time, wait for it to be done, and then give the next one.
- **Focus on what you want (not what you don't).** Tell kids what *to do*, rather than what *not* to do.
 - Replace statements that begin with "Don't/stop _____" with "Please do _____"
 - *Example:* Instead of saying "Don't climb on the furniture," a parent can say, "Please get down from the table."
- **Specific and direct.** Use specific instructions that make it clear to kids what needs to be done. Try to avoid using general statements (e.g., "Let's clean up your toys.") or asking questions ("Should we put on your coat?") if you mean to be giving an instruction.
 - *Example:* Replace "How about we put on your shoes because it's time to go to grandma's?" with "It's time to go to grandma's. Please put on your shoes."
- **Polite and respectful.** Instructions should be direct and clear without being disrespectful to kids. It is helpful to start with, "Please." This shows kids how to be polite.
- **Effective tone.** Kids should learn to listen to instructions given in a normal tone of voice rather only when parents yell or plead. Use a neutral, firm tone of voice.
- **Offer choices.** Kids like to have choices, and this helps them learn to make decisions. "Choice" instructions should be very simple, and you should be okay with all possible choices.
- **Praise cooperation!** When your child follows instructions well, make sure to provide them with extra praise and attention. This helps good listening become a habit.
 - *Example:* You are being such a good listener!

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- **Not getting kids' attention.** Kids have a hard time paying attention to several things at once.
- **Too much info.** When parents say a lot, it is hard for kids to figure out what part they should listen to. They may find it easier to not listen at all!
- **Asking questions or opinion.** To be nice, parents allow for kids to be confused into thinking they have a choice or option to say no.
- **Being vague.** Avoiding verbs that are not directly linked to an action like "act right" or "behave".

An example of better behavior through better instructions:

Not so effective	Better way
Parent: (calling from kitchen) "Okay buddy, put your toys away and get your shoes on. We got to go."	Parent: (walks into living room and kneels by child) "I see you're having fun. I'm going to give you a moment to finish and then we need to go to the store."
Child: (whining) "But I'm not done. Why do we have to go?"	Child: "Okay."
Parent: (still in kitchen) "Come on. Don't give me a hard time. We got to go. We're late."	Parent: (Waited a moment) "Okay, we need to leave now. Please put your cars back in their bin."
Child: (keeps playing, ignores parent).	Child: (listens and picks up) Parent: "Great job picking up. Now, please get your shoes."
Parent: (comes into living room, upset) "I said we got to go. Now put that stuff away and hurry up!"	Child: (listens and puts on shoes) Parent: "What a helper. You did that so fast. Let's go."

Prep for Success

It helps to prepare for giving great instructions by thinking through how you would tell your kids to do some things. What instructions would you give in these scenarios?

Scenario 1: You are trying to get your child to clean up their room. Write down exactly what you would do and say using the steps of giving good instructions:

Scenario 2: You are trying to get your kid to stop getting into everything in the grocery store. Write down what you would do and say using the steps of giving good instructions (hint: stay focused on what you want your child TO DO):

Below, think of other scenarios that are specific for your child. Write down the scenario and the specific way you will give great instructions:



Paying Attention so Attention Pays Off

Attention from caregivers is a powerful motivator for young children, so being strategic with your attention is one of the best ways to improve behavior and teach new skills. You can watch a video on this topic clicking this [link](#) or scanning the above QR code with your mobile device.

Selective Ignoring

- **Resist responding.** It's often tempting to scold or attempt to reason with kids when they engage in annoying or disruptive behaviors, but this kind of attention can backfire and make those behaviors happen more. Instead, try to give as little attention as possible to minor misbehavior.
- **Figure out what behaviors to ignore.** These are behaviors that might be designed to get reactions from you like whining, name calling, tantrums, and yelling.
- **Ignore the behavior you don't like.** This can look like turning your back, resisting arguing or negotiating, or just waiting out disruptive behaviors.
 - Remember, you are ignoring the specific behavior, not ignoring your child. As soon as the misbehavior ends, attention comes right back.

Special Attention

- **Attend to what you like.** Ignoring misbehavior is only one part of using attention strategically. It's even more important to use attention to encourage more good behaviors.
- **Catch your child being good.** Look for any chance to notice positive behavior that you like and make sure you acknowledge it somehow.
- **Be proactive.** If you are busy with work or household tasks and kids aren't getting attention for long stretches, they may learn to start misbehaving to get that attention. If you can take a quick break to praise them for behaving well and give some extra attention, it might save you a tantrum later on.
- **Use physical touch.** Giving hugs, kisses, pats on the back, tussles of the hair, and sitting close gives your child positive attention.

Other Tips for Strategic Attention

- **When in doubt, wait it out.** At first, kids might act out more if they notice you ignoring misbehavior. This is because they're trying to figure out how to get the reaction they're looking for. If you can be consistent and keep ignoring, kids will learn more appropriate ways to get attention.
- **Safety first.** Sometimes ignoring is not a good option. Unsafe or dangerous behavior, like hitting or running somewhere dangerous should not be ignored, but you should respond as calmly as possible. You can also see our information on Time-out as a way to improve dangerous or destructive behaviors.
- **Seize the moment!** Any time your child is playing quietly or generally behaving, it's the perfect time to give positive attention. Providing special attention right away will help your child understand the connection between their behavior and your attention.

Prep for Success

To be ready to use strategic attention effectively, parents should think about what behaviors they want to praise, what behaviors they want to ignore, and what behaviors can't be ignored. Filling in the worksheet below will help parents be ready when the time comes to use these skills!

Behaviors my child does that can be ignored: Write down the very specific behaviors your child does that you find annoying, obnoxious, or otherwise irritating that you think may really be about getting reactions from others or testing limits:

What will “ignoring” look like? Write down what you will do. Will you turn your back, will you walk a few steps away? Will you act like nothing is going on? Will you give one warning (e.g., “I can't help you when you whine like that”) and then ignore?

What behaviors can't be ignored? Write down the behaviors your child does that you think are too unsafe or hurtful to be ignored or aren't about getting a reaction so ignoring won't work. Ignoring also may not work if attention is the goal of the misbehavior. For example, ignoring a child who is getting into a cookie jar probably won't work because they're not getting in the jar to see your reaction; they're doing it to get the cookie!



The Power of Praise

Every day kids should get messages from parents that they are good and loved. When kids get the message that they are loved and seen as good through their parents' eyes, they feel better about themselves, and it strengthens the parent child bond. To watch a video about this topic, click this [link](#) or scanning the above QR code with your mobile device.

The more kids hear about their good behavior, the less they will want to misbehave. Plus, it feels better for parents and kids to be hearing more about good behavior. Following the tips below will help your praise be the best it can be.

Be excited and enthusiastic

- To help kids notice the praise, parents should show excitement through tone and gestures.
 - *Example:* A flat, monotone "Good job!" is very different to a kid than an excited "Way to go! You listened right away!" with a high-five.
- Giving a more noticeable response helps show to the child your praise and how much their good behavior means to you. It's important that praise for good behavior is more energetic and stimulating for kids than responses to misbehavior.

Be specific by using "Labeled Praise"

- The more specific your praise is, the easier it is for kids to know what you want to see from them, so it's good to label exactly what you like.
 - *Example:* Instead of using a general praise like, "Good job!" label specific behaviors like, "I really like how you are using a nice quiet voice like I asked you to!"

Be Immediate

- Parents should be on alert to "catch them being good" and praise appropriate behavior right away. This helps kids understand the connection between their behavior and your reaction.
- Especially for younger kids, the longer parents wait to praise, the harder it is for them to remember their good behavior and learn to do it again.

What to do if kids misbehave a lot?

- When kids are acting up often, it can be hard for parents to think about what good behaviors they want to praise. One good way to identify targets for praise is to think about the "positive opposite" of misbehavior. What would you like your child to do instead?
 - *Example:* "Bad" behavior like hitting other kids can be switched for praise when child does "good" opposite behavior like playing nicely

Example Misbehaviors	Example Positive Opposites
Being too rough or aggressive with peers	Playing nicely or gently
Running off	Walking patiently with parent
Whining or demanding	Asking nicely

Prep for Success

On the left, make a list of problem behaviors. Be as specific as possible. For example, instead of writing “tantrums,” write down exactly what your child does during tantrums (e.g., cries, drops to the ground, runs off). Then, on the right, write down positive behaviors you wish to see instead. Once this has been done, focus on praise and physical positives (e.g., hugs, high-fives) when the positive behaviors happen.

Misbehavior	Positive Opposites
Back-talk—swearing, arguing, saying, “No, I don’t want to!”	Using nice words, stating ideas in a calm voice
Tantrum—yelling, crying, throwing objects, falling to the floor	Taking deep breath, self-calming, walking away, asking for time
Not listening/minding—saying, “No;” walking away from task, not doing task in expected time	Doing what they are told within a short time.



Tips on Time-Out

Sometimes kids do things that are unsafe, harmful, or hurtful, including aggression, darting/running off, breaking things, or regularly not listening to adults. When done right, Time-Out can be a good way to help kids learn that these types of behaviors are not okay and to do them less over time. You can watch a video on this topic at this [link](#) or by scanning the above QR code with your mobile device.

The Key to Effective Time-Outs

- **Make it boring.** Time-Out is about creating a specific type of experience right after kids misbehave. It means removing anything fun or interesting right away (including attention). The point of Time-Out is to make things as *boring* as possible as *quickly* as possible.
 - Time-Out should happen away from activities and items like screens, toys, and books. It should be in a place parents can monitor but don't have to hover. For some families, entryways, hallways, dining areas, or quiet corners work well. For toddlers, on the floor turned away often works just fine.
 - Try to use a space that makes it clear where the child needs to stay. For example, use a chair or small rug on the floor.

Starting Time-Out

- **Label misbehavior.** Right after doing something dangerous or aggressive, the child should be briefly told why they are being put in Time-Out. Then, try to say nothing else and avoid arguing.
 - Example: "You hit, now you have to go to Time-Out."
 - Note: If a child is being sent to Time-Out for not listening, it's okay to give one warning such as, "If you don't pick up those toys like I told you, you're going to Time-Out." Wait a short time (about 10 seconds) to see if they listen. If not, a parent can say, "You didn't listen, you have to go to Time-Out."
- **Place in boring spot quickly.** Immediately and gently, take your child to Time-Out by gently taking the child to the boring spot. Once the child is in the Time-Out, quickly walk away or turn your back.
- **Ignore attempts to avoid Time-Out.** Ignore any whining, negotiating, fussing, yelling, or continued aggression from your child. They may try several ways to get a reaction from you.
 - Remember, Time-Out need to be boring to work. Your attention is very interesting to kids, so any attention at this point makes it so that Time-Out is not boring.

During Time-Out

- **Keep Time-Out boring.** Kids will try to end Time-Out by crying, screaming, pleading, threatening, cajoling, and everything else. You should ignore all of this behavior, because if parents talk to their kids during Time-Out, it's not boring enough. *Don't respond to your child in any way* until Time-Out is over.

- **If Kids Get Up.** Some kids will try to escape from Time-Out before their time is up. If this happens, try to keep things boring and help your child learn they need to serve the Time-Out before they can go back to usual activities.
 - For preschool-aged children, parents should keep putting their child back into Time-Out when the child gets up or tries to run away. Try to do this without saying anything or making eye contact. This shows that Time-Out is going to happen no matter what, and eventually your child will learn to stay in Time-Out.
 - For school aged kids, you can try restricting a privilege (e.g., losing screen time for the day) or extending the total time of Time-Out.
 - If children are being very difficult to control, try using a “backup space.” This is an area you can take them to that is safe until they calm down. Once they have calmed, go back to the original Time-Out spot and start again. No matter what, they still need to do the Time-Out.

Ending Time-Out

- **Length of Time-Out.** For preschoolers, 2 minutes is fine. For older kids, about 5 minutes usually works well. Making Time-out much longer usually won't help.
 - When first using Time-Out, or if kids are having a hard time staying in Time-Out, a shorter length is okay, but it may not work as well until you can make it longer.
 - Parents are in-charge of when Time-Out ends, not the child.
- **Calm and cooperative.** Time-Out can be over when time is up *and* the child is being cooperative. If they are still protesting when time runs out, you should keep the Time-Out going until they are calm for at least 10 seconds.
- **Brief explanation.** Give a short description of why the Time-Out happened.
 - *Example:* “You went to Time-Out because you hit. Remember we don't hit because it hurts other people.”
- **Try again.** If your child earns Time-Out for not listening, give the same instruction again. Time-out is if they cooperate. Otherwise, start over.
- **Make some Time-In.** Time-Out is only effective if it contrasts with “Time-In,” the attention, stimulation, and fun your child normally gets. Look for some positive behavior to praise soon after the Time-Out is over. This helps get attention back on good behavior as quickly as possible.

Other Tips for Effective Time-Outs

- **Practice makes perfect.** During a neutral time, show your child what “good” Time-Out behavior looks like. Then, the child can practice showing that behavior and earn a praise for doing so.
- **Act unbothered.** While children are in Time-Out, parents should try to seem indifferent to misbehavior. The less reaction children get during Time-Out, the better. Try to act like a robot. You can look at a magazine, talk to another adult, etc.
- **Gradually expect more calm.** When first starting Time-Out, count the time that the child is sitting in the chair whether they are being totally calm or not. Once kids show they can stay in the chair, parents should gradually expect more and more “quiet” before kids can get up.
 - Some children sit quietly and don't speak while in Time-Out, while others may talk softly to themselves or fidget. This counts as being quiet and calm.
 - Others may be calming down from crying but haven't completely stopped. The sniffing that goes along with this should also be counted as quiet and calm.

Prep for Success

To get the most out of Time-Out, it's useful to think through all the steps in the process.

What behaviors will get Time-Out? Time-Out should be for more serious misbehavior that is dangerous or destructive, like hitting, running off, or breaking things, and not for “minor” misbehaviors like whining or back talk.

For my child, I will use Time-Out for the following behaviors (try to be very specific):

Where will Time-Out happen? Time-Out should happen in a boring place that is safe for the child.

For my child, Time-Out can happen in the following places:

How long will Time-out last?

What will you do if your child misbehaves during Time-Out? (Remember, be boring!)

If my child whines, cries, yells, or apologizes during Time-Out I will:

If my child gets up out of Time-Out, I will:

What is going to be hard about doing Time-Out? It will be easier to do Time-Out if you have thought about what might go wrong or be hard about it and what you plan to do.

What Will Go Wrong/Be Hard?	What Will I do About That?