

## **Stop Annoying Back Talk Now!**

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Let's say you ask your child to do a simple task like feed the dog. The next thing you know, you hear "Why do I always have to feed the dog?"

Or maybe you hear sarcasm and a smart-alecky tone of voice while your child says, "You don't really expect me to do that?"

Makes you long for the days when children were seen, but not heard, right?

Welcome to the world of back talk, your child's way of expressing disagreement with what you're requesting.

There can be a number of reasons for back talk. Your child may be testing your parental authority. Perhaps your child sees this as an issue of personal identity? Maybe they're mimicking something they heard on television? Maybe they're simply exerting growing independence? Or maybe they simply don't feel like doing what you've asked!

Regardless of the reason, back talk is something that you need to nip in the bud because even the smallest request can become a battle. Also, your child needs to understand that you're the one in charge. But how do you stop this annoying behavior?

First of all, you have to set some ground rules. "You cannot speak to me in a disrespectful manner. There will be a zero tolerance policy." Period.

Then it helps to role play and give the child examples of what comments are respectful and what comments are disrespectful. For instance, are phrases like "whatever..." "duh" or "that sucks" acceptable? Include types of body language that you find disrespectful, if you wish. (Rolling their eyes, head tilted, hand on hip...)

Examine how you're communicating with your child. Have you framed your request in a positive, respectful manner or are they reacting to something negative that you said? Are you using "I" statements, such as "I am frustrated that you waited until the last minute to do this project."? Or are you blaming them? Are you using sarcasm? If you are, you may receive back talk in return.

### **Here are Some Tips to Curb Back Talk:**

1. Call a spade a spade. "That's backtalk and it's not acceptable. I will answer you when you've changed your tone..."
2. "Hmmm... That sounded disrespectful. Let's try it again."
3. Go for the feeling. "You sound annoyed. What's up?"

4. Try problem solving. “We seem to be having a problem here. How can we solve X so we can move on?”
5. Praise respectful communication.
6. Never give in to requests made in a disrespectful way.
7. Stay calm yourself and model how you want to be talked to.
8. Point out the effect that his/her words have on you or the other person. “It hurts me to hear you say that to me. Please try it again.”
9. Enforce a consequence if s/he can’t turn the behavior around after a respectful request from you.

Pick one or two of these strategies and use them consistently. Note that it may take a month or longer to turn this behavior around, so be patient. You’ll be glad that you did!

**Byline:** Toni Schutta is a Parent Coach and Licensed Psychologist with 17 years experience helping families find solutions that work. To receive the **free report “The 7 Worst Mistakes Parents Make (and How to Avoid Them!)** visit <http://www.getparentinghelpnow.com/7mistakessignup.html>. Toni also offers a complimentary 30-minute “Happier Family for You” Planning Session, that’s done by telephone, at your convenience. Please contact Toni at [toni@getparentinghelpnow.com](mailto:toni@getparentinghelpnow.com) to set up your session.