

Some Golden Rules of Preschool Discipline

American Academy of Pediatrics



Whether you're a strict disciplinarian or use a more easygoing approach, the following guidelines should help you shape a strategy of discipline that ultimately will benefit you and your child.

- ❖ Always keep your child's developmental level in mind when you set limits, and don't expect more than he's capable of achieving. For example, a two- or three-year-old can't control the impulse to touch things that attract him, so it's unrealistic for you to expect him not to touch displays at the grocery or toy store.



- ❖ Set the punishment to your child's developmental level. For example, if you decide to send your toddler to his room for misbehaving, don't keep him there for more than about five minutes; any longer and he will forget why he's there. If you prefer to reason with him, keep the discussion simple and practical.



- ❖ Don't change the rules or the punishments at random. That will only confuse your child. As he grows older you naturally will expect more mature behavior, but when you change the rules at that time, tell him why. For example, you may tolerate his pulling on your clothes to get your attention when he's two, but by the time he's four you may want him to find more grown-up ways of approaching you.



- ❖ Make sure that all the adults in the house and other care-givers agree to and understand the limits and punishments used to discipline your child. If one parent says something is okay and the other forbids it, the child is bound to be confused. Eventually he'll figure out that he can get his way by playing one adult against the other, which will make your lives miserable now and in the future. You can prevent this game-playing by presenting a united front.



- ❖ Remember that you are the key role model for your child. The more even-handed and controlled your behavior, the more likely your child will be to pattern himself after you. If, on the other hand, you hit or spank him every time he breaks a rule, you're teaching him that it's okay to solve problems through violence.

