

# Week 4

## Setting Limits



Clear, consistent limits and teaching and encouraging positive behavior lead to cooperative and self-confident children. School-age children are spending more and more time away -- at school, at friends' houses, and in activities outside your home. The limits you set at home teach children how to behave appropriately in other settings and provide a safety net for them in any situation.

This week we'll discuss the process of setting clear and consistent limits and the skills of using Time Out as a way of following up when limits are not followed.

# What Are the Rules?

The first step in selling limits is to provide clear and consistent rules.

Below, list some of the most important rules you have for your First Grader.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

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## Guidelines for Time Out

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1. Select a place.
2. Prepare the room.
3. Explain the procedure to children.
4. Practice Time Out beforehand.
5. Be consistent.
6. Label the behavior that earns Time Out.
7. Don't talk to children when they're in Time Out.
8. Be calm or neutral when giving Time Out.
9. Use a timer.
10. When Time Out is over, don't make children apologize.

### *What to do when children refuse Time Out*

1. Stay calm.
2. Add up to 5 extra minutes.
3. Remove privilege.

## The Time Out Procedure

One of the most important things to remember about using Time Out is to *use it*, not just threaten it. Once you've decided to use Time Out, follow these steps.

1. **Label the Problem.** A simple statement, such as “*You didn't stop arguing. That's a Time Out.*”
2. Wait 10 seconds for your child to go.
3. Set the timer or check your watch for five minutes.
4. Remove yourself -- **no** talking to or checking on your child.
5. Stay neutral. When time is up, avoid discussion.
6. Carry on with regular activity when Time Out is over.

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## **Privilege Removal**

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### **Before you begin using Time Out, decide which privileges to use as backups**

Privilege removal is a backup consequence to use when your children refuse to go to Time Out. Eventually, they learn that it is easier to go to Time Out for 5 minutes than to lose a privilege for an hour or two.

### **The privileges must be under parental control**

Make sure that you monitor the privilege that you remove. For example, if you take away the bike for an hour, know where the bike is. Lock it up if necessary. **If** you can't control the privilege, don't put it on your list.

### **Common privileges to remove**

Many parents remove the following privileges: TV time, playing with a favorite toy or piece of sports equipment (bike, skateboard), computer, cell phone, Xbox or similar, playing with a friend, iPod use, goodies in the refrigerator, going to a planned activity, using the land line phone, going out to play.

### **Remove the privilege for no more than 1 to 2 hours**

Lengthy privilege removal builds up resentment.

### **Follow through**

When you say that a privilege will be lost, keep your word and do it that day.

### **Remove the privilege as soon as possible**

The sooner the discipline issue is over, the easier it is to have a pleasant family atmosphere.

### **Don't remove privileges that the child has earned**

Keep reward systems separate from punishment.

# Barriers to Effective Discipline

The following is a list of typical barriers to effective discipline.

1. *"I don't discipline until I'm really mad."*

WHAT TO DO: If you wait until you're mad, you'll be feeling rather than thinking. Try to use discipline at the first sign of a problem.

2. *"When I get mad, I start yelling and the children don't listen."*

WHAT TO DO: What your children are hearing is your anger rather than the correction you're trying to provide. If you're feeling angry, take time to calm down – take a deep breath, count slowly to 10, or even leave for a few minutes, then come back and deliver the correction slowly and in a neutral tone of voice.

3. *"I often give more than one consequence."* (For example, removing a privilege and sending to room.)

WHAT TO DO: If you are doing this, you're probably upset and have let problems go on too long. Remember, catch problems early.

4. *"I find myself reacting and not know what I want to do."*

WHAT TO DO: By consistently using Time Out, you have a plan of action each time your child misbehaves.

5. *"Sometimes it's just not worth it and I let the misbehavior slide."*

WHAT TO DO: Because of being tired, stressed, upset, and just being human, none of us are 100% consistent in our discipline. A reasonable goal to strive for is to be consistent at least 80% of the time.

6. *"I threaten consequences but don't follow through."*

WHAT TO DO: The danger of using threats is that parents often feel they are doing something when they threaten. Don't threaten -- discipline.

# Common Problems in Time Out

The first few times you use Time Out, your child's reaction may indicate it is fun. The novelty will soon wear off. Don't be surprised if, in fact, you see an increase in misbehavior. This does not mean Time Out isn't working. Rather, it's a sign it is working and your child is testing how serious you are about using Time Out. The following are typical misbehaviors and reactions from children during Time Out.

## 1. Messes

Even when the Time Out room has been destruction-proofed, children can still find ways to make a mess. Your job is to remain calm and merely ask your child to clean up the mess before leaving Time Out. If he or she refuses to clean up, then this can lead to another Time Out.

## 2. Noisiness

Often children may go with a minimal protest, but then start yelling or making noise while they are in Time Out. What we recommend is telling your child Time Out will begin when he or she is quiet, and simply reset the timer when the quiet starts. The natural question that arises is "*What if my child doesn't quiet down?*" This brings up a bigger question of what to do when children either refuse to go or to settle down in Time Out. We recommend a privilege loss at that point.

## 3. "I'll do it now"

It's common that once children have been given Time Out for not doing what they were told, they will say *I'll do it now, okay?* A good response for you to make is, "*That's great, but first Time Out.*" If you teach children that you will forgo Time Out because they've finally decided to agree, you are teaching them Time Out shouldn't be taken seriously, and you're teaching them to not mind until *you* react.

## 4. "I hate you"

Because you're taking control of the situation and putting a limit on their behavior, children will often be angry. They can say things that are hurtful or mean, and that can make you feel bad. Ignore statements like "*I hate you.*" They get you off track and create an emotional situation for both of you.

## 5. "Fine with me, I like Time Out"

Another equally common ploy, but one that doesn't hurt as much, is "*I don't care, I like Time Out.*" The trick for you is not to measure the effectiveness of Time Out by the kind of emotional reaction that your child has to it. If you get involved in discussing these kinds of reactions, it prolongs the process, leads to an emotional exchange -- and most importantly -- your child isn't going to Time Out.

## **What If?**

### **What if my partner will not use Time Out?**

Discussing types of discipline that will be used at home is an important parent issue. When parents cannot form a united front, children often play one parent against the other, making more work for parents and less compliance for children.

### **What if my child says, "I don't care," or "I like Time Out," or "My friends don't do this"?**

These are all common things children say. Ignore them and don't base your discipline on what your child says. Be confident that you are using an effective consequence that, when applied consistently, changes children's behavior.

### **What if I get so angry that I combine Time Out with yelling or spanking?**

Time Out is a brief, mild consequence that works best when applied calmly and not combined with more harsh parent reactions. Remember, if you get upset, you're not in control of the situation, your child is.

### **What if my relatives feel I'm being too hard on my children when I send them to Time Out for a minor compliance issue?**

Noncompliance is not a minor issue. Let your relatives know that this is how you plan to handle situations like not minding, and that you aren't looking for advice on this matter.

### **What if my child misbehaves outside while playing with friends, and when told to go into the house for a Time Out, he or she refuses?**

The first thing to remember is not to set up a situation where you are arguing with your child. You can give him or her the option of going in for a Time Out or losing a privilege such as not going outside after dinner.



# Your Notes and Ideas