

## Time-Outs

This method of discipline may be used on children when they are as young as one year old, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. The AAP recommends time-outs as a last resort for punishment when other responses to the child's behavior fail to work.

### ***Top 3 Punishments to Try Before Resorting to Time-Outs, from the American Academy of Pediatrics***

1. **Natural consequences:** This method works best, and it allows children to see the direct results of their actions. The AAP example is if your child drops her cookies on the floor, she will not have cookies to eat. Do not lecture your child or get her more cookies. She will learn the consequences of her actions. However, do not allow your child to experience consequences that will put her in danger.
2. **Logical consequences:** This method is useful, because natural consequences are not always appropriate, says the AAP. A child who leaves his toys on the floor may not care. If your child is old enough to put the toys away on his own but does not, moms could put them away for a day in a place where the child cannot reach them. If the child is younger than six and needs help putting away toys but refuses to help, the AAP says that moms could take the child's hand and silently finish putting the toys away -- the insistence that the child help and your silence becomes a clear consequence. When using this method, it is important to calmly let your child know that you are serious and to follow through with what you say.
3. **Withholding privileges:** Since you may not have a logical consequence to give your child at every moment, it can be effective to tell your child that if he does not comply, he will have to give up something he values. When using this method, the AAP says to not take away something the child needs, such as meals. For children under the age of 7, it works best to take the privilege away as soon as the child misbehaves. If a young kid acts up in the morning but you punish him by taking away his evening television viewing, the AAP says he may be unable to connect the misbehavior to the punishment.

The usual guideline for time-outs is one minute for each year of your child's life -- a three-year-old would be in time-out for three minutes. But the AAP says even 15 seconds in time-out can be effective.

### ***What Moms Can Do about Time-Outs***

Parenting expert and psychotherapist Jill Spivack shares tips to help parents execute effective time-outs:

1. I like to frame time-outs as a non-punitive opportunity for the child to calm themselves down. In fact, I prefer to call it "calm-down time" when a child's body is out of control and they can't stop hitting/throwing/grabbing, etc.
  - a. The goal in the "calm-down time" is an opportunity for the child, who has normal angry feelings, to go to a special spot where he can calm his body down and "get his angries out," and once he's calm (and not acting in a violent manner), he can rejoin the family.
2. Make the calm-down place conducive to getting aggression out. Place bean bags, pillows, and/or comforters on the floor in a safe space, and tell the child that they can kick and hit and roll around in this particular area because it's safe to do so.
  - a. This provides the sensory outlet for the child to get his feelings out of his system so that he can come back and use words to describe how he's feeling, or if he's non-verbal, he can come back and get a hug when he feels better.
3. Explain to your child that anger is normal and show him alternatives to hitting people or grabbing. Show him other ways of getting his feelings out, but don't expect him never to feel angry! Anger is a normal human emotion that needs to have an outlet, and young children often aren't yet socialized to know how to get their feelings out other than hitting/biting or throwing things, so you want to offer alternatives when they feel mad.
  - a. Again, showing them where the "calm-down place" is and how they can get their feelings out there is a good way to help them. Tell your child that even Mommy and Daddy sometimes go to their room when they feel super angry and yell into their pillow or lay down on their squishy bed to get their angries out, and once they feel better, they can come back and talk.
4. Solve problems together once the child is calm. Once the child has gotten his anger out, it's helpful to talk together about how he might have expressed it in a different way (other than hitting his sister, etc.). Explain why you needed to help him go to the calm-down place -- so that you could keep everyone safe in the house -- and now that he's calm, you can hug and talk about it.
5. If your child is non-verbal and under the age of 2 years, you may want to try to distract them from negative behaviors before trying the calm-down place. If it doesn't work to distract or redirect them to a different activity, you can also try a "safe hold," where you sit your child on your lap and hold them close to you to see if he can calm down by being held (and to avoid allowing them to hurt another person in the house).

If a toddler is involved in a behavior that is not dangerous to another person, it's often unnecessary to use time-outs.

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1. [Hey New-Age Parents! Your Kid Needs Time Out!](#)
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### ***Additional Resources for Time-Outs***

- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [Kids Health.org](#)
- [New York-Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital](#)