

HRIC HELPFUL HINTS

**PARENTING:
HOW TO IMPROVE
TODDLER
BEHAVIOR**

Life can be frustrating for toddlers. Though eager to be independent, young children cannot always move as swiftly as they would like or clearly express their needs. They also tend to have trouble dealing with limits, compromise and disappointment. This can lead to tantrums and misbehavior.

But you can teach your toddler to behave well by providing love, clear rules and a degree of routine and consistency.

Consider these practical parenting tips.

● **Prioritize rules**

Rather than overloading your child with rules from the outset — which might frustrate him or her — prioritize those geared toward safety first and gradually add rules over time.

● **Avoid situations that might trigger frustration or tantrums.**

For example, don't give your child toys that are too advanced for him or her. Avoid long outings in which your child has to sit still or can't play — or bring along an activity.

● **Stick to the schedule.**

Keep a daily routine so that your child will know what to expect. Try to make sure your child is home at naptimes, bedtimes, and mealtimes. If you are out, always keep food on hand in case of a sudden hungerattack. Keep excursions short (that means finding another restaurant if the one you've chosen has an hour-long wait or doing your grocery shopping at times when the lines are shortest).

● **Think Like a Toddler**

Toddlers aren't mini-adults. They have trouble understanding many of the things we take for granted, like how to follow directions and behave appropriately. Seeing the scenario from a toddler's perspective can help prevent a tantrum. You will not be coddling, but you' are rather validating their feelings.

● **Practice the Art of Distraction.**

Make your toddler's short attention span work for you. Parents need to create an environment that is most conducive to good toddler behavior. If they're into something they're not

supposed to do, the idea is not to punish them but to get another activity going.

● **Give Your Child a Break**

Time-outs are one of the foundations of child discipline, but they may not be the best approach for the toddler stage. The negative implication of being sent away can teach kids that they're bad rather than promote good behavior. If you do give your child a time-out, limit it to just a minute or two at this age. Instead of calling it a time-out, which can be confusing to children under 3, refer to it as something more positive, such as "cozy corner".



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