

EFFECTIVE USE OF TIME-OUT



Time-out involves physically removing a child from a problem situation and placing him in a quiet spot for a brief period of time to calm down. Time-out teaches your child that he has control over his behavior and can avoid a consequence if he chooses to calm down.

Time-out works because your child gets no attention when his behavior is unacceptable. Children want their parents' attention more than anything. If parents give their children the most attention when they misbehave, children learn to act out just to get all of that attention! The principle behind time-out is to give very little attention when behavior is inappropriate. It works best when you give LOTS of attention during good behavior. In other words, catch your child being good!

Time-out also works because it gives you that much needed moment to catch your own breath. Sometimes you need a moment to yourself, especially when your child is trying your patience!



● KINDS OF THINGS YOUR CHILD MIGHT DO THAT CAN PUT HIM INTO TIME-OUT CAN INCLUDE

- > Whining
- > Yelling
- > Fighting
- > Having a temper tantrum

● TELL YOUR CHILD HOW TIME-OUT WILL WORK

- *"Some things are not okay to do, like whining, hitting, fighting and not listening to rules that Mommy and Daddy use to keep you safe. If you do any of these, Mommy will give you three chances to listen and stop what you are doing. If you don't listen by the time Mommy gets to three, then you will have to sit quietly to calm yourself."*

● TIME-OUT THE 1-2-3- MAGIC WAY

1. At the first sign of misbehavior, say **"That's 1."** Wait 15 seconds.
2. If the behavior continues, say **"That's 2."** Wait 15 seconds more.
3. If the behavior continues, say **"That's 3. You're in time-out."**

Time-out works best with children 18 months to 5 years of age. The general rule is to keep your child in time-out for 1 minute for each year. So your 2-year-old child would be in time-out for 2 minutes.

● **PLACE YOUR CHILD IN A SAFE SPOT**

- > **Put your toddler in his playpen** or sit your 5-year-old on a step or on a stool.
- > **Always keep your child within your view and reach.**
- > **Pick a quiet spot where there is not much to do.**
- > **Do not leave your child in his room** where he might decide to play with toys instead of sitting quietly and calming himself down.

● **ALWAYS USE A TIMER**

- > **Be clear about when time-out starts**, “Bryson, your 6 minutes of time-out start now.”
- > **If your child tries to get up**, place him back in time-out. Restart your timer without reacting or talking.

● **DON'T TAKE THE BAIT!**

Your child is acting out to get your attention, so remain calm and do not react!

- > **No yelling**
- > **No bargaining**
- > **No whining...and no discussion!**
 - Expect your child, especially when you first start using this tool, to cry, whine, ask you many times why they are in time-out, and complain that you are an unfair or bad parent. Remind yourself to stand your ground and not get into a discussion with them about it.
 - Do not cut time-out short because your child looks sad or says he is sorry. He will learn to take time-out seriously if you follow through on it every time.

● **THIS IS ALSO A TIME-OUT FOR YOU,**

So take the opportunity to regain your own sense of calm

- > **Breathe deeply**
- > **Don't feel guilty**
 - Remind yourself, *“I'm a good parent and, even though Bryson is crying right now, he is learning a really good skill...to control his behavior.”*
 - Remind yourself that this ‘breather’ gives you a chance to not act out in anger.



● AFTER THE TIME-OUT IS OVER, LIFE CAN CONTINUE AS NORMAL

- > **Remind your child** that his behavior was not okay and required a time-out. Tell him that you love him.
 - “Bryson, time-out is over. Calling your sister names is not okay no matter what she does or says. I love you very much, but I warned you three times. Since you didn’t listen, you got six minutes of time-out.”
- > **Give him a chance** to talk about his feelings and possible solutions. How much you choose to talk really depends on your child’s age and development.

Time-out gives you a wonderful discipline tool that really works. This means that you will never have to think about hitting your child. Remember to be consistent, and don’t give up — this technique takes practice! Over time, your child will learn that he can control his behavior, avoid consequences and earn your greatest attention by behaving well.

SOURCES:

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The Incredible Years Parenting Program Series, The Incredible Years, Inc. (<http://www.incredibleyears.com/>)

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