

## Time-out Tips

### Use time-out:

When you want to **decrease** a particular behavior. This simple method is best for inappropriate behaviors such as tantrums, biting, hitting, destroying property, talking back, cursing, slapping or pulling hair.



### Don't use time out:

When you want to **increase** behaviors such as toilet training, listening, cleaning up toys, cooperating or doing homework. Instead, you will increase instances of good behavior by encouraging it when you see your child doing something positive. Your approval is worth more than you can imagine.



Time-out is not useful or effective for accidents, mildly disruptive behavior or mildly annoying behavior. Try to ignore these behaviors unless the child is in danger of hurting him or herself or others.

### Time-out teaches children:

- ✓ The connection between behavior and consequences
- ✓ Alternatives to lashing out to get what he or she wants
- ✓ Anger management
- ✓ Patience
- ✓ To make choices
- ✓ That you mean business and won't be manipulated

If you're feeling stressed out, call to speak anonymously with a trained volunteer of Parents Anonymous who can provide support and refer you to resources in your community.

**Family Helpline**  
**1-800-THE KIDS**  
**1-800-843-5437**



Department of Children and Families  
New Jersey Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect

## Time-out Tips for Your Children



Department of Children and Families

## What is Time-out?

**T**ime-out is a simple, safe discipline technique that can help you to manage your child's behavior. All you need is some determination, consistency, a portable kitchen timer and a chair.

It takes about 6-8 weeks on the average to make a permanent behavior change.

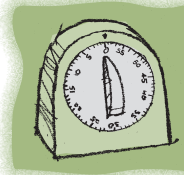
**C**hildren often have temper tantrums to get your undivided attention, to get what they want or because they do not know how to express their anger or needs to you. As parents, we often make the mistake of giving in. When you use time-out, you don't give in; instead, you withdraw your attention.

**T**ime-out works best when you target one behavior at a time. Destroying or breaking toys is a good example.

**E**xplain time-out to your child before you begin to use the technique. Your child will probably react to the new strategy. He or she might actually increase the behavior you are trying to change at first. Don't give up. It takes about 6-8 weeks on the average to make a permanent behavior change. The key ingredient is consistency.

## How to Use Time-out

1



Choose ONE behavior you want to change. Buy a simple kitchen timer. Get a chair and pick a very boring corner of your house. Once you get your equipment together, you are ready to begin.

2



As soon as the targeted behavior begins, take your child to the time-out chair. Use no more than 10 words on the way. Say things like: "Destroying your toys is not acceptable. Time-out!" Do not scold or spank your child. Set the timer. The rule of thumb is one minute per age of your child. A minute without your attention feels like forever to a child. Put the timer where the child can hear it. Explain that time-out is over when the timer rings.

3



Stay in the same room with your child. Set up a space for yourself where you can keep an eye on your child. Don't talk to him or her during time-out. Pay no attention whatsoever. Do something else, such as read a magazine. Use your child's time-out as a time to calm yourself down.

4



Your child may react to the first time-out. He or she may get out of the chair. Simply put your child back in the chair. He or she may kick and scream. Remember, the point of this behavior is to get your attention. Try not to give in unless the child is hurting him or herself. Let older children (over age 7) know that a minute will be added to time-out every time they get up. Then the child is aware that the time was added as a result of his or her behavior.

♥ From Age 2 to 6 – you **take** the child to time-out

♥ From Age 7 and older – you **send** the child to time-out

5



When the timer rings, time-out is over. Ask your child to explain why he had a time-out. Talk about better ways for your child to express anger or to get your attention.