

# Timeout

Although you can't ignore dangerous or destructive behavior, you can call a timeout. This technique is most successful with three- and four-year-olds, who generally know when they've done something seriously wrong and understand that this is why they're being disciplined.



## Here's how the timeout works:

1. Define the behavior you want to stop, and keep track of how frequently it occurs. Discipline of any kind should be used only when your child is intentionally doing something they know is forbidden.
2. Warn them that if they continue to do this, they'll be disciplined.
3. Identify a timeout area, a place that's empty of toys, television or other attractions – in other words, one that's as boring as possible for the child.
4. When the child does something they know will result in timeout, send them immediately to the area you have selected and tell them how long they have to stay there. One minute for each-year-of-age is usually sufficient. Place a timer or a clock within view so they can keep track of the time.
5. If they cry or scream, reset the timer. If they leave the timeout area, return them there and reset the timer.
6. Use a timeout each and every time they violate this particular rule.

**Also, any time you notice that they are observing the rule, congratulate them for behaving so well.**

Adapted from *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5*,  
The American Academy of Pediatrics, 1993.



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