

Disciplining Your Toddler

No doubt about it, toddlers can be a handful! At times, it will seem like they can be in two places at the same time. Setting limits and maintaining some kind of control are difficult with toddlers because they are so independent, yet have so few skills to communicate and solve problems. The keys to disciplining your toddler include, love, understanding, and quick thinking!

Here are some tips to help parents start the disciplining process:

- ✓ *Set up a safe environment.* “Toddler-proof” your home by locking up dangerous chemicals and medicines, covering electrical outlets, and storing breakable objects up high, especially if your toddler is a climber.
- ✓ *Establish a routine.* Toddlers need naps and reasonable bedtimes. Small stomachs need nutritious snacks and meals frequently. Taking care of basic needs can go a long way in preventing a cranky, whiny child.
- ✓ *Divert their attention.* When a child is doing something unacceptable, try to call attention to another activity. Since young children’s attention spans are so short, distraction is often effective.
- ✓ *Ignore undesirable attention.* The goal in this strategy is to have the child stop the undesirable behavior by not paying attention to it. Without drawing attention to themselves, children will eventually quit whatever they’re doing.
- ✓ *Use natural consequences.* Natural consequences are results that naturally occur after a child’s behavior. For example, the natural result of refusing to eat is hunger. These can be very effective for teaching children consequences to their behaviors.
- ✓ *Set a good example.* Toddlers love to imitate their parents. If you want your toddler to treat the dog kindly or have good eating habits, be sure to demonstrate how to do it.

Disciplining toddlers is not easy. And you won’t always feel good about how you handled a situation. It’s important to recognize that you are human. Good luck!

Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care – NNCC. (1993) Oesterreich, L. *Understanding children: Disciplining your toddler.* (Pm 1529c.) Iowa State University Extension. Ames, Iowa.