



Teaching with Time-Outs

Using time-outs can be a very effective way to correct unwanted and inappropriate behaviors. A great deal of research has been done on this method of discipline at distinguished facilities, such as Johns Hopkins University. The use of time-outs can be effective for children as young as 9 months, which is when some children begin negative behaviors, such as hitting others. However, time-outs are most effective when used for children between the ages of 2 and 6 years.

Parents should practice proper technique for using time-outs, preferably before they become necessary. Time-outs should only be used for serious issues, such as kicking, hitting, biting, or cursing. They should also be used in conjunction with positive reinforcement for positive behaviors. As a parent, you should provide your child with positive attention when it is appropriate and not focus solely on negative actions.

When attempting to modify your child's behavior by putting them in time-out, you should not give them a warning in advance. For example, if your child curses, you should simply say, "You are not allowed to say that word, you are in time-out." A general rule to use when implementing time-out is to give your child 1 minute per 1 year of age. There should be no communication or interaction with the child while they are in the time-out period.

Once the child's time is up, you should return them to the area that he or she was in prior to time-out and redirect their attention to a new activity. It is best to avoid lecturing your child about the behavior immediately after the time-out. Children tend to be emotional after being punished. Instead, revisit the situation at a later time. Maybe ask your child what they should have done differently.

Keep in mind that time-outs are effective, but behavior changes tend to happen over time as opposed to immediately.

Be patient!