

Resources on Early Learning

Here's what you can do instead of spank children:

Overlook attention-seeking behaviors

Ignore behavior when possible. Overlook behaviors that will not harm your child or others, such as whining, bad language, and tantrums. It's hard not to do something, but sometimes our children act up because they want our attention.

Connect your response to the misbehavior

Briefly take away privileges related to the misbehavior. For example, if your children fight over TV programs, take away TV privileges for a few hours or a day. If the punishment lasts too long, your child may forget the original misbehavior, and the lesson may be lost.

Use logical consequences to make the point. For example, if your child misuses a toy, take away the toy for a few hours. If your child spills crackers on the floor, have her help pick them up.

Encourage positive behaviors

Rearrange space. Try creative solutions. If clothes and toys are often left lying about, start using baskets and low hooks for easier cleanup. If school notes are misplaced, assign a special table or counter for them.

Redirect behavior. Substitute a "can do" behavior for a "can't do" behavior. If your child draws on the walls, stock up on drawing paper and let her know where it is. If your child throws sand, provide a ball for him to throw instead.

Use the "when/then" rule. Tie what you want to what your children want. For example, when your children pick up their toys, then they can watch TV. When your children finish their baths, then they can have a storybook read to them.

Use timeout sparingly

Use "timeout" to respond to dangerous and harmful behaviors such as biting, hitting, and purposeful destruction. Timeout is best used to help your child calm down and regain control. After timeout is over, acknowledge your child's good behavior when you can.