

Behavior Support: Reducing Interruptions

Children often interrupt at times when parents are busy or are not paying attention to them. To cut down on interruptions, use short teaching sessions. They will help you and your child communicate better.

You will need

- kitchen timer
- activities for your child to do
- items for your child to earn for good behavior

What to do

You will need to have short training sessions with your child. The goal is for your child to practice waiting. Try not to worry about getting anything done. The next 4 steps are the best way to run your training sessions on waiting.

1. First, set up an activity during which your child often interrupts.
 - For example: making a phone call, talking with another adult, doing paperwork or working from home.
2. Tell your child what you want them to do while you are busy. Let them know that you will not be able to talk to them for 3 minutes. Set a timer, then start your task or conversation. Shorten training sessions if 3 minutes is too long. This will help make sure your child is successful.
3. Once the timer starts, ignore any interruptions or other problem behaviors, unless it is dangerous. To ignore means to not look at, respond to or notice your child at all. At first, the interruptions may be louder and more frequent. This means that ignoring your child is working. Your child will not keep interrupting if you continue to ignore them.

4. When the timer goes off, stop what you are doing. If your child did not interrupt you, give them verbal or physical praise or a reward. If your child interrupted or not, give them the chance to talk to you. For example, say, “You did a great job waiting for me. Is there anything you wanted to say to me?”

By slowly increasing time on the timer, your child will learn to wait for longer periods of time without interrupting you. You may want to use 3 minutes for the first few days and then increase to 5 minutes for a few days.

Remember, the goal of the session is not for you to finish the task. It is to start teaching your child how not to interrupt. Tip: Do not start a teaching session when you have an important phone call to make or when you are doing any important task.

Individual recommendations

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