



Behavior Support: Preventative Strategies

Using strategies to stop problem behaviors will set your child up for success. When you use these strategies the right way, you should have fewer problem behaviors to deal with later. You can mix and match these strategies.

You will need

- Timer
- Picture or written schedule

What to do

- Catch your child being good by giving verbal praise when he or she behaves well. Do this at least once every 5 minutes. It can be done more often if needed.
- Use a written schedule to help your child organize and structure his or her day. This is very helpful, especially when the child has a lot of free time, like during the summer or holiday breaks. Use a written schedule strategy to move (transition) between activities
 - Provide a transition warning several minutes before moving to the next item on the visual schedule. For example, say “You have three minutes left for playing computer.”
 - When your child is ready to transition to the next activity, show him or her the schedule to see what is coming up. For example, say “Up next, we are doing three math problems.”
 - After completing that activity, have the child check the schedule again, remove the completed activity and repeat the process.
- Use a timer and verbal warnings for the length of each activity to help the child transition from preferred activities to non-preferred activities. When starting an activity, set a timer so that the child knows how long that activity will last. Before the end of the activity, say “One more minute of reading your book, and then it’s time for Legos!”
- When asking your child to complete an activity, use a “first, then” statement. For example, say “First, you need to take a shower, and then we can play a game.”

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What to do, continued

- Write a list of the tasks that need to be completed when there are multiple tasks to be done, like making the bed, cleaning up toys, etc. Provide reinforcement to your child for completing those individual tasks.
- If you ask your child to do a hard task or a task you think he or she will refuse, be prepared to follow through. If you do not have the time or energy, or are worried it will be too dangerous, it is better to prevent future problems by just not asking.
- Make sure that all adults in your child’s life are reacting to behaviors the same way. That way it does not make it harder for you later.
- Make sure the adult dealing with the behavior is the only one talking to your child during that time. If another adult steps in, that will create confusion for your child.
- Try to increase your child’s independence by completing tasks, like showering, chores, and getting dressed.
- Remind your child to use his or her “inside voice.” It is helpful for the adults to also lower their voices inside as an example.
- Display a set of the family rules and refer to them often as a reminder or prompt.
- It is very important for all adults to follow the behavior plan and be consistent with the plan. Be sure to communicate with one another.
- Give your child choices, like “Do you want to take a shower or do your chore first?” This helps your child have some control.

Choices and control keep every request or task from being a “battle” with your child. We ask children to do a lot of things each day. It is best to limit your requests to the things you really want and need.

Individual recommendations
