



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

## **Helping Hand™**

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# **Behavior Support: Prevention Strategies**

Using strategies to stop problem behaviors before they occur 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
- visual schedule (picture or written schedule)

### **What to do**

- Catch your child being good by giving them praise when they behave well. Do this randomly, or at least once every 15 minutes.
- Use a visual schedule to help your child organize and structure their day. This is very helpful, especially when the child has a lot of free time, like during the summer or holiday breaks. Use a visual schedule strategy to transition (move) between activities.
- Provide a transition warning a few minutes before moving to the next item on the visual schedule. For example, say, “You have three minutes left to play on the tablet.”
- When it is time for your child to transition to the next activity, show them the schedule to see what is coming up. For example, say, “Up next, we are doing three math problems.”
- After completing that activity, have your child check the schedule again, check off the completed activity and repeat the process.
- Use a timer and verbal warnings for the length of each activity. This helps your child transition from activities they like to non-preferred activities. When starting an activity, set a timer so your 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.”
- Write out a list when there are multiple tasks to be done, like making the bed, cleaning up toys, etc. Provide reinforcement, like praising your child when they complete each task.
- Be ready to follow through if your child does not do a task you ask them to do. If you do not have the time or energy to follow through, it is best not to ask at that time.
- Make sure that all adults in your child’s life react to their behaviors the same way. That way it does not make it harder for you later.
- The adult dealing with the behavior should be the only one talking to your child during that time. If another adult steps in, it will confuse your child.
- Try to increase your child’s independence by completing tasks like showering, chores, and getting dressed.
- If your child acts out when asked to complete a task, remain calm and speak softly so they have to quiet down to hear you..
- Display a set of the family rules. 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 chores first?” This helps your child have some control when possible. Choices can prevent 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

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