

MODERN FAMILIES + FRESH IDEAS

parenting

the best discipline tactics: a quiz [1]

Published on *Parenting* (<http://www.parenting.com>) It's an all-too-common scenario: You're trying to get dinner ready, do a load of laundry, and help your older child with her homework when you realize your preschooler's breaking the no-food-in-the-living-room rule. You remind him to eat at the kitchen table, but he ignores you, and you let it go -- distracted by dinner, a phone call, and (feel free to fill in any examples from your life). You're too busy to handle a meltdown now. When it comes to setting up -- and enforcing -- rules, most of us make mistakes. What would you do if:

...he won't stay in bed?

1) Your 3-year-old happily participates in a ritual of bedtime story, toothbrushing, and a good-night kiss. But he comes into your room nightly after he's tucked in. You decide to:

A: Let him sleep in your room on comforters on the floor. At least this way, everyone gets some rest.

B: Keep returning him to his bed night after endless night.

C: Give him a consequence: If he gets out of bed, he won't go to the park the next day.

...she threatens a public tantrum?

2) You're at the toy store buying a birthday present for your child's friend, and your 4-year-old begs for a stuffed panda on the shelf. You tell her you won't buy it because it's too expensive. Her whining escalates. You sense a tantrum approaching. You:

A: Don't give in, but buy her a less expensive toy while you're in the checkout line.

B: Point out that she already has an alpine-size mountain of stuffed animals in her room, so you won't buy it. As she keeps pleading, you continue to explain so she understands.

C: Tell her no, state your reasons, and then refuse to engage in any more talk about it.

...he won't clean his room?

3) You tell your 5-year-old to clean his room, but when you return a half hour later he's playing with his Legos and nothing's been touched. Annoyed, you:

A: Work alongside him and help put away the toys and books.

B: Ask him again, but be more specific with your instructions.

C: Tell him he can't play with his toys for two days if he won't clean them up.

...she won't stop watching TV?

4) Your child refuses to turn off the tube and get dressed, which means she'll be late for preschool again. Out of frustration, you tell her that she won't be allowed to watch TV for an entire week as a result. On the fourth day, she begs to watch just one show. You:

A: Relent, because you realize a weeklong ban is excessive. You explain that you spoke out of anger that day.

B: Stick to your guns and tell her she can't watch TV for another three days.

C: Tell her that for every time she asks to watch TV, you'll extend the ban by another day.

...he won't buckle up?

5) You're in a hurry to pull out of the driveway in the morning, but your 2-year-old balks at having to sit in his car seat. You:

A: Tell him he doesn't have a choice, then firmly buckle him in.

B: Explain why it's important for him to sit in the car seat, so he understands why it's a rule.

C: Offer to play whatever tape he wants while you're driving if he'll sit quietly.

...she hits another child?

6) You're chatting with other moms at the playground when your child swats another youngster as they fight over a toy. You:

A: Have her say she's sorry.

B: Remove her immediately so she understands hitting is wrong.

C: Take away the toy and tell her not to hit.

...he doesn't want to go home?

7) It's time to leave the park, but your preschooler's happily ensconced in the sandbox. You sit down next to him and say:

A: "It's time to put your shoes on because we're leaving."

B: "Will you please put your shoes on and go to the car?"

C: "If you don't get into the car right now, I'm leaving!"

...she interrupts your conversations?

8) You're talking to a friend and your child consistently butts in to ask for a glass of water or for help finding a toy. You:

A: Permit the interruptions, so long as she says, "Excuse me."

B: Listen to her requests so you can determine whether they can wait. If so, you ask her to be patient until you're done talking.

C: Tell her to wait until you've finished speaking.

Click to the next page to see your score *i*

As a mom of six, Rosemary Black never lacks for chances to improve her discipline strategies

<H4> How did you do </H4>

Issue # 1: He won't stay in bed

Answer: B At this age, kids love to cause drama and test your will, so the steady, dull return to bed is the best way to show your resolve, says Donna Rogan, M.D., pediatrician and mom of three in Pleasantville, New York. (You can certainly make exceptions if your child has a nightmare, is sick, or you're traveling.)

When Dr. Rogan's son Colin was 2, he'd come into her bed nearly every night, and she and her husband were chronically exhausted from the interruption. Finally they decided to bite the bullet and return him to his own bed each time.

"Consistency is key," says Dr. Rogan. "If you let him stay with you just once and engage you in conversation or turn on the TV, you've lost it. Once Colin realized after about two weeks that the light wasn't going to go on and he wasn't going to be able to hang out with us, he decided to stay in his own bed." Getting up and returning your child to his bed several times a night might be exhausting, but it'll pay off with a good night's sleep down the road.

Issue # 2: She threatens a public tantrum

Answer: C Show that when you make a decision, you intend to stand firm, says Kathryn Kvols, president of the International Network for Children and Families, in Gainesville, Florida, an educational group that offers parenting courses.

If your child senses even the slightest hesitation, she'll press the issue, so keep your response as brief as possible. If she starts to get louder and more upset, give her a choice: either calm down or leave the store. And be ready to take her out of there right away.

To lessen "buy me this" whines from the start: Before entering the store, tell your child what you're willing to buy (or not). You might say that she has a dollar -- and only a dollar -- to spend any way she wants.

When my daughter, Madeline, was 5, we visited a few museums in New York City, each of which had a tempting gift shop. I told her at the beginning of the trip that she had \$10 to spend as she wished, and to my surprise, she hoarded it right until the end. She wound up buying a few bracelets and never once nagged for more money.

Issue # 3: He won't clean his room

Answer: B If you want something done, express your request clearly so your child understands exactly what to do, where to start, and how he'll know when he's finished. Robynn Meehan, a mom of four kids, ages 5 to 11, in Stillwater, New Jersey, says she doesn't just tell 5-year-old Maura to "clean your room." "That's just too daunting a task," she says. "Instead, I say, 'Please clean that corner. Pick up the Polly Pockets and put them in the bin, and pick up the books and put them on the shelf.'"

Don't forget to praise your child for a job well done. You might even put stars or stickers on a wall chart for a bang-up cleaning job.

Issue # 4: She won't stop watching TV

Answer: A or B Sticking to what you originally said is fine, but if your child's been behaving, being flexible about the length of the ban is okay, too. Explain that you spoke out of anger and that you're willing to give her a second chance. A smart tip: Before shouting out a punishment when you're heated up, delay telling your child how you'll discipline her. After you cool down, assess the situation and make sure "the punishment fits the crime" before telling your child she's off TV for life.

The best way to avoid having to discipline to begin with is to have rules in place from the start, so your child knows what's expected of her. When Atlanta mom Stephanie Nelson's sons were 5 and 7, she came up with a rule to avoid the constant TV conflicts: no TV at all during the week. On weekends, the boys are permitted to watch a few hours per day. "Now that they can't fall back on it, they find other ways to entertain themselves," she says. "In the summer, we relax the rules, but they're so busy playing outside that they still don't watch much."

Issue # 5: He won't buckle up

Answer: A This one's a no-brainer. Your child should get the clear message that being in a car seat is a safety requirement, not a

game, and that it's nonnegotiable. Don't reward him for getting into the car seat, but it can help to offer choices: "Would you like to buckle the seat yourself, or would you like me to?"

A trick that works for Kathryn Kvols: When her 5-year-old hated to put on his seat belt, she made him the "boss of the seat belts" and wouldn't start the car until he made sure everyone was buckled in. He felt good about being in charge, so he didn't mind putting on his own belt.

Issue # 6: She hits another child

Answer: C Although it's a good idea to have your child apologize to her playmate and then remove her from the playground if she gets more upset, the first thing you should do is take her hand, make eye contact, and tell her "No hitting!" If she calms down and plays nicely from then on, be sure to offer words of praise.

Issue # 7: He doesn't want to go home

Answer: A When you ask your child a question, you're giving him control. Instead, say specifically what you want. If possible, give a five-minute warning, and stick to it so he starts to get a sense of how long five minutes is. If he balks, explain in a non-angry tone what the consequences will be if he refuses to comply. You might say, "The five minutes are up, so it's time to leave. If you won't walk to the car, I'll have to carry you." To make it fun, say, "Let's bunny hop to the car." Or suggest that he be a sack of potatoes and you'll carry him over your shoulder. Never threaten to leave him if he doesn't comply. "Being left behind is one of a child's greatest fears," says Kvols.

Issue # 8: She interrupts your conversations

Answer: C Kids ages 3 and up have enough patience to wait for a minute, and there's hardly ever a real necessity for an interruption. (Okay, maybe an occasional bathroom emergency!) Tell your child to wait her turn before speaking. Be assertive, but don't yell. If she keeps interrupting, simply ignore her. And practice what you preach: When it's her turn to talk, listen to what she says before responding.

How did you do? If you had more wrong answers than right ones, you needn't be too hard on yourself. It's never too late to hone your discipline tactics -- your child will certainly give you plenty of opportunities!

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