

Time-out can be used when your child is engaging in challenging behavior to get your attention. Before you use time-out, try using redirection or positively stated directions for what you want your child to do. If your child does not comply and you want to use time-out, warn your child once in a calm manner (e.g., “You cannot hit me to get my attention, if you don’t stop and use your words in a quiet voice, you will have a time-out.”). Wait about 30 seconds to provide your child with the chance to calm down and follow your directions.

Step 1. Tell your child why

Name the behavior and state that you are going to give them a time-out. You can say, “*You cannot hit me, so you need a time-out to calm down. When the time-out is over and you are calm, you can get up.*” Calmly guide your child to the time-out chair (e.g., spot, carpet square, stool). Do not scold or interact.

Step 2: Start the timer

Use 1 minute for each year of age (e.g., three years is 3 minutes). Do not interact with your child while the child is in time-out.

- a. If your child leaves during the time-out, return them to the chair and reset the timer.
- b. If your child is not calm when the timer ends, restate the expectation that “*When you are calm, you can leave the chair.*” Reset the timer for 1 minute and say, “*I am giving you another minute so you can calm down and the time-out will be over.*”

Step 3: Time-out ends

If your child is calm for a few seconds before the timer ends, tell your child that the time-out is over. Provide a brief reminder (in a calm voice) to your child about what you expect, such as, “*I am glad you are calm now, remember to _____.*”

Step 4: Praise your child's positive behavior

As soon as you can, provide your child with positive encouragement for an appropriate behavior.



Warning! Time-out is not effective if:

- ▶ The time-out area is interesting to the child (e.g., toys or screens).
- ▶ You talk to your child during the time-out (e.g., providing positive or negative attention).
- ▶ Other people, including children, talk or pay attention to your child during the time-out.
- ▶ You threaten your child with a time-out.
- ▶ You delay the time-out (e.g., “You will have a time-out when we get home.”).
- ▶ You scold or lecture your child during the process.