

DISCIPLINE

Preteens are children between the ages of 10 and 12. Many important changes occur in children during this time. Every child is different. As you try some of the suggestions below, keep your individual child's personality in mind.



First homework, then baseball. It's better to give a reward to work for rather than a punishment to avoid.

Often, the area of discipline or teaching your child appropriate behaviour, is challenging for parents during the preteen years. It is important for parents to think about the effects of two different approaches – discipline as 'teaching' or positive discipline and discipline as 'punishment.' When we think about discipline as teaching, children learn what acceptable behaviour is, how to control their own behaviour, and to do the right thing even when no one else is watching. It focuses on the long-term goal of raising kids to be kind, responsible and honest adults who have good relationships with their parents and others. On the other hand, discipline as 'punishment' is about correcting behaviour only. Punishment is more about harshly penalizing a child when he or she breaks the rules. Correcting a child this way may stop the unwanted behaviour in the short term, but can damage the parent-child relationship and can cause further problems with the child's behaviour. Canadian law protects children from harsh physical punishment and research tells us that positive discipline is the most effective way to help children learn appropriate behaviour.



How you can help – and stay connected to your child



“Sometimes Kyle’s behaviour really angers me. When this happens I take some time to calm down before disciplining him.”

1. **Use positive discipline strategies.**
 - a. **Stick to a regular routine with your child.** Reasonable and consistent daily routines for eating, sleeping, school and other activities help your child to know what to expect. This makes it easier for children to learn and behave well. Disorganized and inconsistent routines can create stress and behaviour problems, so try to stick to a regular routine when you can.
 - b. **Set clear and realistic expectations.** Children are more likely to behave well when they understand what we want them to do. Tell your child what is acceptable and not acceptable in your home, so they know what is expected of them.
 - c. **Explain why you want your child to behave a certain way.** Children learn better when they understand the reasons why we want them to behave (or not behave) in certain ways. Knowing the reasons behind rules will increase their frustration tolerance. It will also help teach your child to make good decisions about their own behaviour.
 - d. **Praise your child when he behaves well.** Everyone loves positive support from others. Children are no different. Noticing and commenting on children’s positive behaviour and how they have improved makes it more likely they will repeat positive behaviour in the future. Praising and supporting your child in this way also helps build a stronger relationship between you and your child.
 - e. **Link responsibilities to rewards.** One positive way to encourage good behaviour is to link expected behaviour to something your child wants. For example, “When you finish cleaning up the kitchen, you can use the computer”, or, “You can go and meet your friends after you finish your homework.” Your child is more likely to follow your rules when he knows it is not all about work; he can still have fun, as long as responsibilities are met.
2. **If you are too angry with your child, take some time to calm down.** Reacting right away when you are angry can mean you say and do things you may later regret. There will be times your child really angers you with poor behaviour. When this happens, take the time you need to calm your emotions and think about the best way to discipline your child before you act.
3. **Remember that learning takes time.** When parents use positive discipline regularly, children learn what is expected of them and gradually learn how to control their own behaviour. Remember, it is a process that takes time, and you may not see results right away. Both parents and children need to work at it, practice it and be willing to learn from their mistakes.
4. **Think about the consequences of punishment.** Punishment teaches children things you don’t want them to learn. For example, using harsh punishment strategies may make your child fearful, angry and mistrustful of you and adults in general. Taking things away from your child for a long time will not teach her how to do the right thing but may make her resentful. Before you punish your child, think carefully about what you might be teaching him and try to use a positive discipline strategy instead.

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