



Prevent Child Abuse
St. Joseph County™
A Chartered Council of Prevent Child Abuse Indiana

From Tantrums to Teenagers:

TAILORING AGE-APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE



Appropriate discipline is essential to a child's development, but it can be challenging. As a parent or caretaker, you need to set boundaries and promote positive behavior. This guide offers age-appropriate discipline tips for your child's development.

WHAT TO DO

Toddler (1-3 years)

As your child grows, their need for exploration and independence becomes stronger. During this stage, toddlers are learning their way around the world. It is common for them to act out if they struggle to communicate their needs. Understanding them and guiding their choices encourages good behavior and fosters their development.

- Offer choices to give your toddler a sense of control within limits.
- Redirect their attention when they engage in undesired behavior.
- Use positive reinforcement, such as praise and rewards, to encourage good behavior.
- Be consistent with rules and consequences.

Early Childhood (4-6 years)

At this stage, children begin to grasp the concept of rules and consequences. They grow emotionally and socially, but they may still act out as they learn how to manage their emotions. Encouraging communication and providing support helps them understand and regulate their emotions.

- Set clear expectations and explain the reasons behind rules.
- Use "time-ins" as a way for your child to pause and reflect on their behavior.
- Help your child understand consequences and learn from their actions.

Middle Childhood (7-10 years)

At this stage, children begin to seek independence. Their emotions and behaviors may be influenced by peer pressure, school stress, and a growing sense of identity. Guiding their decision-making and empathy helps them develop into responsible and respectful people.

- Teach empathy by discussing the feelings and perspectives of others
- Encouraging your child to identify solutions for how to behave in the future.
- Give your child a second chance to fix a mistake and use positive reinforcement when they succeed.
- Resist the temptation to bail your child out of trouble. Let them experience natural consequences to their actions.



Adolescence (11-18 years)

Adolescence brings unique challenges as teenagers navigate physical changes, relationships, and identity formation. Emotional volatility and testing boundaries are common. Establishing consequences and maintaining open communication are crucial in guiding their behavior.

- Maintain open and honest communication, and be open to negotiation
- Set boundaries and rules and explain the consequences of their choices (for example, curfew will become earlier if it is broken.)
- Give them time to cool down during conversations about behavior. Don't fall into the trap of arguing with them.



Remember, **every child is unique**, and these age ranges are general guidelines. Adjust your discipline approach to suit your child's individual needs. By using these strategies, you promote positive behavior and support your child's development.



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