

Toddler tantrums? Pediatricians offer tips to curb bad behavior

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Toddler behavior won't always be good. Outbursts are normal.

Yet, you can also use those aggravating moments to help shape your little one's behavior, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Start by teaching the "house rules," the AAP advises. Put away valuables you don't want your toddler to touch. Consider setting up an area with books and toys where your toddler can safely play. When your toddler breaks a rule, use positive reinforcement rather than threats. Reprimand quickly to help with understanding.

Use healthy distractions and try different approaches, but don't bribe with sweets, the AAP recommends.

Toddlers have little natural self-control, so it's important to teach them to express their feelings through words rather than kicking, biting or hitting when angry. "We don't hurt each other," is one phrase you can say.

Other tips include praising your [child](#) for appropriate behavior, controlling your own temper and staying strong when you need to discipline your child.

It is important for your child to understand when he or she is in the wrong and to take responsibility for his or her actions. Time-outs are OK for kids as young as 1, the AAP says.

It's important to supervise your child carefully when there are disputes with playmates. If it's minor, let kids solve the problem on their own. You must intervene if the fight is physical or keeps going, the AAP says. Make it clear that it doesn't matter who "started it." There is no excuse for trying to hurt each other. Instead of fighting, teach your child to say "no" in a firm tone of voice, turn his back or find compromises.

But how much is too much when it comes to tough [toddler](#) behavior?

The AAP recommends calling a pediatrician if your child seems unusually aggressive for more than a few weeks or you can't cope with his [behavior](#) on your own.

Additional warning signs are physical injury to himself or others, attacks on you or other adults, being sent home or barred from play by a neighbor or school, or your own fear for the safety of those around him. The most important warning sign is the frequency of outbursts.

Once you find effective ways to reward [good behavior](#) and discourage bad, you can use these to establish an approach that works both at home and away, the AAP says. Progress may be slow, but a stable, secure home life with loving discipline and full-time supervision is the best way to prevent [aggressive behavior](#).

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [information on behavior or conduct disorders in kids](#).

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