

Time Outs

Time outs aren't bad for kids. Kids, like adults, may need some time to regulate emotions. If done well, timeouts can quickly improve challenging behavior.

Structure of a Time Out

The basic steps of a time out are identifying a specific location, saying "timeout" immediately and taking the child to the location, ignoring the child and all misbehavior completely during timeout until they are quiet and calm, and finally releasing the child with a short series of directions to ensure they are ready to return to the activity.

Component	Guidelines	Rationale
Why	Noncompliance toward a command (not listening), aggression, or rule violations.	Children are motivated to avoid timeout because there is nothing going on and nothing they can do about it.
What	Timeout from attention, stuff, and movement.	Children do not like situations where there is nothing going on.
Where	Timeout means putting your child in a boring place for a brief period of time with no attention stuff, or movement.	It's not important where timeout occurs, rather, how it occurs.
What if my child refuses to go?	Physically guide them rather than instructing them to go.	Using an instruction sets the occasion for defiance or noncompliance.
What to say during timeout	From the moment you say "timeout" until the moment timeout is over you say nothing.	Timeout means timeout from attention, stuff, and movement. If you are giving a child attention, then something is going on.
How to handle misbehavior in timeout	Ignore it completely!	The child is already experiencing a consequence.
How long should timeout last?	Timeout is over when the child is quiet and still.	Exit from timeout should be dependent upon child behavior, not the passage of time.
Ending timeout	Once your child is quiet and still, say, "Thank you for being quiet, timeout is over."	This helps the child understand that timeout is over because they are quiet and still.
What to do after timeout	Issue several commands and praise compliance.	The child's response to the command will tell you whether they are ready to listen or need to return to timeout. It is not helpful to lecture on what they did that led to timeout.