

Encouraging Good Behavior in Toddlers

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It's normal for a toddler to have temper tantrums. But, you may be able to reduce the frequency, duration or intensity of your child's fits by taking these steps:

Know your child's limits. Your child may misbehave because he or she doesn't understand or can't do what you're asking.

Keep it friendly. Use a friendly tone of voice when you ask your toddler to do something. Phrase your request as an invitation rather than a command. Say, "please" and "thank you", as in, "please stand still while I put on your coat."

Take 'no' in stride. Don't overreact when your toddler says no. Instead, calmly repeat your request.

Pick your battles. Only say no when it's absolutely necessary.

Avoid situations that may trigger tantrums. If your child always seems to have tantrums at the grocery store, hire a sitter the next time you go shopping. Also know that children are more likely to act out when they're tired, hungry, sick or in an unfamiliar setting.

Make it fun. Distract your child or make a game out of good behavior. Your child will be more likely to do what you want if you make an activity fun.

Stick to the schedule. Keep a daily routine as much as possible so that your child will know what to expect.

Encourage good communication. Remind your child to use words to express his or her feelings (and you remember to do the same).

When (not if) your child has a tantrum, remain calm and distract him or her. Ignore minor displays of anger, such as crying—but if your child hits, kicks, or screams for prolonged periods of time, remove him or her from the situation. Hold your child or give her or her time alone to cool down.

Remember, children learn how to act by watching their parents. The best way to show your child how to behave is to set a positive example for him or her to follow.