



## Effective Discipline Strategies

### Setting Limits

A major goal of discipline is to teach your child acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. The best way to achieve this goal is by setting limits. Children need limits in order to get a sense of what they can and cannot do, and how they can balance their own desires with the desires of other people.

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**Here are the basic steps to setting limits. Even though the nature of limits will change as your child gets older, the basic principles stay the same.**

**#1: Consider the rules and consequences you want to use.**

Rules need to be age-appropriate and reasonable. Make sure the same rules apply to everyone in the family. If you expect your child to not slam doors, then neither can you. Consequences need to be age-appropriate, realistic and safe. Don't state a consequence that you cannot or wouldn't want to enforce.

**#2: Make a request or state the rule.**

Make sure you have your child's attention. The best way to be sure of their attention is to make eye contact with them. Making a request while your child is engrossed in their favorite TV show will likely not be effective. Be clear, brief, respectful, and concrete in making your request or setting the limit. Don't ask – just calmly state. Try to start your request with "I" rather than "You." The request "I want you to wash up for supper" is more effective than "It is dinner time – you know what you need to do."

**#3: Explain consequences.**

Clearly explain the consequence if your child does not comply with your request or rule. Be clear, calm and direct. The best consequences are natural and logical – a direct result of the child's actions. "If you fail Algebra again this 6 week term, you'll have to study more so you won't be able to play on the basketball team."

**#4: Follow through with the consequences.**

Implementing the consequences is the toughest part of setting limits. Many parents have difficulty with this step, often because they threatened unreasonable consequences. Are you REALLY not going to EVER buy them something again? Consider reexamining both your rules and your consequences if you frequently don't follow through. The important part of setting limits is not the actual consequence – rather, the most important part is doing what you say you're going to do.