

**The Guiding Childhood Behavior Series  
has pamphlets on the following topics:**

- **biting**
- **crying**
- **discipline**
- **lying**
- **going to the store**
- **stealing**
- **teaching independence**
- **temper tantrums**
- **toilet training**

**Contact the Kent County Health Department  
if you would like to know more about these or  
other childhood behavior topics.**

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Copies of this brochure are available on the Kent County  
Health Department web site at  
[www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm](http://www.co.kent.mi.us/health/publications.htm)

# **DISCIPLINE**

**Children, Ages 3-5**

**Guiding Childhood Behavior Series**



**This pamphlet tells you:**

- **why you should have routines.**
- **why you should have rules.**

## Teaching as Discipline

Most parents view discipline as either teaching a child right from wrong or punishing a child. For example, out of anger, some parents punish their children by spanking them. This may cause a child to become angry and afraid of the parent. This also does not help the child learn what she should do. Instead, parents can discipline their child by stopping the child when she is doing something wrong. Tell her why it is wrong. Then tell her what she should do. Also, tell her that if she does the same thing again, she will not get to have or get to do something that is important to her. Teaching your child will help her know how you want her to act; how to control herself.



## Have A Routine

Children like routine. Doing the same things at the same time each day, helps your child feel safe. It tells her what you want her to do and when to do it. When she knows what to expect, she may be less likely to act up. For example, you may want her to get ready for bed in five minutes. Set the timer for five minutes. Tell her that when it goes off, it is time to get ready for bed. This will help teach her about time and it will also help her make the switch from playing to bedtime. Be sure to give her some time to make the switch. Children do not move as fast as adults.

## Children Ask Many Questions

"Why?" is a question that she will ask you over and over as she learns about her world. This may make you mad, but it shows that she is thinking more. When you answer her questions, keep your answer as short as possible or she will have a hard time remembering what you said. If she asks you a question that you do not have an answer for, be honest and tell her you do not know.

## Rules

You should have a few rules that your child must follow. Rules show her that you care about her. Just be sure that there are not too many rules or rules that are too strict. If there are, she may say something like, "You can't make me." It is also important not to change the rules. Having the same rules all the time makes her feel safe.

At times, she may forget one of the rules. Tell her what the rule is again. For example, you might say, "Remember, to pick up your toys before your bath." If she still does not follow the rule, it may be that she did not understand what you said. Stay calm and tell her again.

When she does follow the rule, praise her right away. You might say, "Thank you for picking up your toys." By praising her right away, she is more likely to do it again. You might want to use a reward like a small toy that she would like.

Sometimes she will not follow the rules even if she remembers them. If she is acting up, it is because she wants to:

- get her own way.
- have fun.
- get rid of her anger.
- feel in control.
- get your attention.



When she does not follow a rule, give her a warning. Tell her what you will do the next time she does not follow the rules. For example, "Next time, if you do not pick up your toys before your bath, then you will not get a cookie before you go to bed."