

# Tips for Handling Misbehavior At Home

**Create and Teach Rules/Expectations:** It is important to come up with 3-5 simple, realistic and developmentally appropriate rules. You can come up with the rules together with your learner. Make sure the rules are clear and that your learner understands them. Teach the rules, practice them using examples and non-examples, and provide your child positive feedback when they are following the rules.

**Examples of Rules/Expectations:** 1. Stay in your work area 2. Follow directions 3. Use kind words  
Create positive and negative consequences for following/not following the rules. The consequences must be valuable to your child so they have buy-in for following the rules.

**Examples of Consequences:** *Positive consequence:* Extra time on their tablet. *Negative consequence:* Lose access to their tablet for one of their break periods (they can try again for their next break).

**Be Sure You Can Follow Through:** Make sure you're giving realistic consequences. Positive consequences don't need to be "over-the-top", while negative consequences should be something you are willing and able to follow through with. If you impose an unrealistic negative consequence, such as "I'm going to throw all your toys away!", you are not likely to follow through. Your child will recognize that you do not follow through on your word and this will become problematic.

**Be Flexible:** It's ok to be flexible with your child. If there are chores you would like done but your child is engaged in another activity, set a timer and let them know the expectations for when the timer goes off. It may also be helpful if you include your child when setting the expected time. You can say to them "I hear your words and see that you are enjoying your time on your tablet, but I really need your help with cleaning your room. Would you like 10 or 15 more min on your tablet?". Allowing your child to have some input and choice in the expectations increases the likelihood of them following through with the expectations.

**Ignore Minor Misbehavior, Pick Your Battles:** Children often seek attention by doing things they know will bug their parents (you). It's ok to ignore these behaviors as long as they are not engaging in unsafe or dangerous behaviors. Ignoring the minor behaviors and giving attention to the desired behaviors will increase the likelihood of your child engaging more in the desired behaviors. We want to pick our battles with our children. Let the small things go and focus (reinforce) on the behaviors you want to see. If you asked your child to finish their laundry (i.e., take it from the dryer, fold it, and put it away), but they only get through the folding part, focus on the fact that they did a good part of the expectation and ask if they would like help putting it away.

**Limiting Time with Preferred Items:** It may be helpful to set certain expectations before your child engages in problematic behaviors. Set ground rules for when your child is allowed to have access to their technology and also let them know that if they do not follow through with their work or chores, that they may lose this access during the next redeem time for that day. It may look like this; expectations for the morning are they get up, get dressed, make their bed, and clean up after they have eaten breakfast. When this is done they have 30 min to redeem. Setting up contingencies throughout their day gives your child a clear picture of what the expectations are and what is on the line if they do not follow through on their end.

**Use Effective Consequences:** Make sure your discipline doesn't accidentally reinforce or strengthen their behavior. If your child is calling your name or annoying you and you stop what you are doing to yell at them or lecture them about how important what you are trying to do right now is, you are essentially giving them what they want, your attention. Another example would be a child throwing their school supplies or refusing to sit down to work, so you send them to their room for time out; this allows them to get out of the work demand. Remember, when you have to correct your child, use a neutral and assertive tone but do not get animated, especially if you suspect they are doing a behavior to seek your attention. If they are doing anything they can to get out of work, you can reduce the task and offer more breaks to encourage some progress in the moment. You can also let them know that this assignment or task will be waiting for them and they won't be able to engage in any desired activities until the task is complete.

**Using Environment Restoring/Improving Consequences:** If your child does something to upset, damage or create a mess in the environment, you may want to require they restore the environment to its' original state before they are allowed to move on. You may need to break the environment down into smaller chunks for them to clean but keep the demand present until they get it all the way back to normal, then they will be able to earn rewards again once the environment is restored. Over-Correction can also be used for repeated or careless behaviors. If your child always leaves their glass on the sink instead of rinsing it and putting it in the dishwasher, you may have a cut off time where if the glass is out still they will not only have to rinse and put away but they will also have to do any/all other dishes or clean the counter too.

**Put Items/Reinforcers on Time-Out, Not Kids:** If your child violates a rule, especially one that involves using or earning a specific item, you can place that item on time out, (some families put a see through container in a high but visible location for the time out spot) for a specified period of time. The toy/item has to be off limits for the whole time and once the time is up, it moves out of the container and can be re-earned.

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