Tools for Your Child's Success.org

Guidance and Discipline for Skill Building Age 9 Summary

Why Discipline?

As a parent or someone in a parenting role, you can be purposeful and deliberate in providing guidance and discipline. Approaching guidance and discipline for skill building as teachable moments to grow your child's skills can transform your understanding of discipline. It can enrich your relationship with your child. Children ages 5-10 work on understanding and applying rules in various situations. They are seeking independence and will naturally test limits and break rules. This is a normal part of their development and necessary for their learning. Guidance and discipline aim to support the learning process and avoid harm.

Tip These steps are done best when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.



- Ask yourself:
  - "Does my child have an unmet need?" They might need someone to listen or give them attention.
  - Ask them about how they are feeling. *"I noticed your face got red. So, when you said unkind things to your sister, were you feeling frustrated?"*
  - Ask them about how they think others might be feeling. *"Your sister cried when you said those unkind words to her. How might she be feeling?"*
- Use your best listening skills. Paraphrase what you heard your child say. A conversation might go something like this:
  - Child: "When my brother stepped on my foot, I got so mad that I hit him."
  - Parent modeling paraphrasing: *"So, I hear that when your brother stepped on your foot, you responded by hitting him and breaking a house rule.*"
  - If you hear a subtext of feeling, as in this example, you can also reflect back the feeling implied. Parent reflecting feeling: *"I hear you were mad. Were your feelings hurt too when he stepped on you?"*
- Explore the mind-body connection. Ask: *"How does your body feel now?"* See how descriptively they can list their physical signs of well-being. Now ask: *"How does your body feel when you are angry?"* Find out how your child feels and make the connection between those symptoms and the usual feelings they are having.

Trap Avoid letting the question turn into an accusation. Remember to stay calm and that the goal of the question is to help the child uncover feelings.



Teach New Skills

- Teach your child positive behaviors. Ask: *"What helps you feel better when you're sad, mad, or hurt*?"
- Teach positive ways to ask for attention. Consider: "*How can my child learn to seek my attention in acceptable ways?"* Then, actively teach those kinds of attention-getting behaviors.
- Model assertive communication through "I-messages": *"I feel _____(insert feeling word) when you _____ (name the words or actions that upset you) because (state the impact) _____."*
- Begin to teach your child to repair harm.
- End the day with love.
- Work on your family feelings vocabulary.
- Create a calm down space.

Tip Create a ritual of sharing words of love and care at bedtime. Ending the day reflecting on how much you appreciate one another could be the best way to send your child off to sleep.

Tip Create a nonverbal signal you can use to gain each other's attention. So often, a parent or someone in a parenting role is on the phone, across the store, or in a conversation with a neighbor. One example of a nonverbal signal is to hold up your high five, showing you need five more minutes, and then you'll respond. Practice using it, and then be sure to follow up with your child after five minutes so that they discover success with the signal.



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Accept feelings. *"I hear you're upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better? Would your calm down space help you feel better?"*
- Use "Show me…" statements. *"Show me how you can ask for attention."*
- Offer limited and authentic choices. "*Do you want to do homework at the kitchen counter or the dining room table?*"
- Recognize effort by using "I notice…" statements. *"I notice how you used our wait five minutes hand signal. It worked! That's excellent!"*
- Practice deep breathing.
- Follow through on repairing harm.

  Include reflection on the day in your bedtime routine. Ask: *"What happened today that made you happy?"* or *"What were the best moments in your day?"*

Trap When following through on repairing harm, resist forcing your child to apologize. Forcing a child to apologize teaches your child a memorized response. An apology may make you feel better, but it does not teach your child to accept responsibility for their actions or to begin to understand another's feelings.



- Ask key questions. "*You are going to see Julie today. Do you remember what you can do to assert your feelings?"*
- Learn about development.
- Promote an "I can" belief.
- Foster friendships.
- Stay engaged. Working together on ideas for trying out new and different coping strategies can help offer additional support and motivation for your child when tough issues arise.
- Apply logical consequences when needed.



- No matter how old your child is, your positive reinforcement and encouragement have a significant impact.
- There are many ways you can reinforce your child's efforts. It is important to distinguish between three types of reinforcement – recognition, rewards, and bribes. These three distinct parenting behaviors have different impacts on your child's behavior.
    - **Recognition** occurs after you observe the desired behavior in your child. Noticing and naming the specific behavior you want to reinforce is key to promoting more of it. For example, *"You used your calm down space when you were frustrated-- love seeing that!"* Recognition can include nonverbal recognition such as a smile, high five, or hug.
    - **Rewards** can be helpful in certain situations by providing a concrete, timely, and positive incentive for doing a good job. A reward is determined ahead of time so that the child knows what to expect, like "*If you remember to take deep breaths and keep calm when it is time to put your game away, we will listen to your favorite music while you get ready for bed.*" (if you XX, then I'll XX) It stops any negotiations in the heat of the moment. A reward could be used to teach positive behavior or break a bad habit. The goal should be to help your child progress to a time when the reward will no longer be needed. If used too often, rewards can decrease a child's intrinsic motivation.
    - Unlike a reward, **bribes** aren't planned ahead of time and generally happen when a parent or someone in a parenting role is in the middle of a crisis (like in the grocery store checkout line and your children are arguing. To avoid disaster, a parent or someone in a parenting role offers to buy a sucker if the children will stop the arguing). While bribes can be helpful in the short term to manage

stressful situations, they will not grow lasting motivation, or behavior change and should be avoided.

- Build celebrations into your routine. For example, snuggle together and listen to relaxing music after your child repairs harm with a sibling. Or, in the morning, once ready for school, leave a special note of gratitude in their lunchbox.

Recommended Citation: Center for Health and Safety Culture. (2023). *Guidance and Discipline for Skill Building Age 9 Summary.* Retrieved from https://www.ToolsforYourChildsSuccess.org

This content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Tools for Your Child's Success communities, financial supporters, contributors, SAMHSA, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

© 2023 Center for Health and Safety Culture at Montana State University