

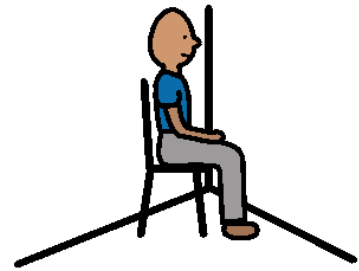
What is Time-out? (from CDC USA)

Behaviour Management

It is important to remember that all behaviour is communication.

Sometimes misbehaviour can be the child's way of:

- asking for attention,
- avoiding difficult tasks,
- expressing fear or frustration



When we understand the 'why?', we can best address the behaviour. We can also teach the child to 'communicate' their need in a more appropriate way, e.g. 'please play with me', or 'I need help.'

When you have given the child another way to communicate, and they do not use this, but continue to use the misbehaviour then, there is a need for another behaviour management strategy like time-out.

Time-out is when the child is removed from:

1. where the unwanted behaviour (misbehaviour) happened.
2. all things that are fun.

Important

S/he:

1. does not get any attention in time-out.
2. cannot interact with his/ her parents or anyone else.

Time-out is boring. Time-out works to change unwanted behaviours because children do not usually like to be bored.

- Time-out is not used for all misbehaviours.
- Some behaviours like crying or whining can be ignored.
- Distracting the child with a toy or a song can help prevent or stop misbehaviour.
- Behaviours that cannot be ignored or redirected with distraction should be followed by a consequence that will stop the misbehaviour.
- Delay or removal of privileges and time-out can be used to stop misbehaviour.

When Should Time-Out Be Used?

- When the child misbehaves, you can use a consequence of your choice.
- For toddlers and pre-schoolers, it is better to try distraction and redirection first.
- If that does not work, you can consider other discipline strategies, like removing an activity or toy the child likes.

There are 4 times when time-out may be a good choice:

1. **The child does something dangerous, like running in the street.**

A time-out in this situation clearly shows the child that this behaviour is never okay.

2. **The child does something harmful, like hurting another child.**

A time-out can help the child see that hurting others is never okay.

3. **The child breaks a family/ school rule.**

Because children know it is the consequence, a time-out warning is not used. Remember that family rules are for those misbehaviours that are never okay. Make sure that the child knows the family/ school rules and understands that breaking the rules will mean a time-out.

4. **The child does not follow your direction after a warning.**

The child is more likely to follow your directions if s/he gets praise for following directions or consequences for not following the direction. A time-out warning can help the child do as you directed. If the child does not follow your directions after one warning, a time-out may be a good consequence. The time-out warning is described below.

The Time-Out Warning

When the child does not follow your directions give a time-out warning.

The time-out warning needs to be stated clearly, simply, and as a statement (not as a question). State this warning in a neutral tone and follow through with the time-out every time if the child does not do as you directed.

For example, look at when the parent decides to use a time-out warning based on her daughter's response.

Example 1

"It's almost time for dinner. Please put your toys away."

Parent pauses for 20 seconds and child continues to play.

The parent says to her daughter, "If you don't put away your toys, you will have to go to time-out."

This is the time-out warning.

The parent pauses for 20 more seconds to allow the child time to follow directions.

The child begins to comply and packs away the toys.

After the child has finished picking up her toys, the parent says, "Thanks for listening and putting your toys away."

Example 2

"It's almost time for dinner. Please put your toys away."

Parent pauses for 20 seconds and child continues to play.

The parent says to her daughter, "If you don't put away your toys, you will have to go to time-out."

This is the time-out warning.

The parent pauses for 20 more seconds to allow the child time to follow directions.

The child continues playing. The parent says, "You did not pick up your toys, so you have to go to time-out."

The parent takes her daughter to the time-out chair and says, "Stay here until I tell you to get up."

Remember

Only give the time-out warning **one** time. After time-out, the child needs to do what you directed. If she refuses again, she goes back to time-out. The time-out process can go on for a while the first couple of times you use it. The child will eventually learn that you mean what you say, and the time-outs will get easier.

Tips for Time-Out

- **Explain time-out or show it to the child in a way she can understand.** Showing the child exactly what to do when you give a time-out can help the time-out go smoothly and be more likely to work.
You may need to show the child several times so she can remember.
- **Practice time-out with the child when you are both in a good mood.** Then, have the child tell you what happens during time-out. By doing this, you can be sure she understands.
- **Make sure the child knows what behaviour leads to a time-out.** For example, when you create a list of family rules, let the child know time-out is the consequence if the rule is broken.
- **Tell the child where time-outs will happen.** Let the child know the rules and steps for time-out.
- **Use time-out the same way every time.** When the steps of time-out are predictable, time-outs are more likely to help improve the child's misbehaviour.
- **Use a visual timer to help the child see how long they will be in timeout.** Use a visual timer e.g. an app on your phone, an hourglass or egg timer, so that the child can see how long they have to sit in timeout and how much time is left in timeout.
- **Focus on one misbehaviour first.** When you first start using time-out, focus on a single misbehaviour you would like to stop, such as biting.
- **Time-out should happen immediately after the misbehaviour.** The faster time-out happens, the more likely the child will know that her behaviour led to the time-out.
- **Do not threaten the child with a time-out.** If you forget to follow through, the child may not believe you are serious about time-out. If you want to use a time-out to stop misbehaviour, it is best to use it immediately after the misbehaviour.



Content source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)