



Stop the Whining

*“They won’t let me play.”
“My finger hurts.”
“She looked at me.”
“I can’t do it.”
“This is yucky.”*

It’s hard to work with a child who whines.

WHY DO CHILDREN WHINE?

Many children start to whine when they are between two and four years old. They are trying out different voices at this time to see how others respond to them. Whining often gets children a lot of attention in a short amount of time. It can become a habit. If the child needs and likes the attention, she will continue to whine and maybe try out some sounds that are even worse!

STOP WHINING BEFORE IT BEGINS

Ask yourself some questions about when the child starts to whine. If he whines at certain times, you may be able to make some changes to prevent whining.

Does she whine only at certain times, such as early or late in the day?

Make sure the child is busy with activities during those times of day.

Does the child whine when she is bored or tired?

Make sure she has a number of activities to choose from. You may need to change the schedule to plan an earlier nap time or move this child into quiet activities, as she gets tired.

Does she whine when you’re working with other children?

Get her working on an activity before you go to work with other children or bring her with you to help other children.

Does she whine at mealtimes?

Start pleasant meal-time conversations at the table. Make sure she is included and has a chance to share her ideas.



WHAT TO SAY TO A WHINING CHILD

When a child starts to talk to you in a whining voice, here are some things to say:

- “Stop! I won’t listen to your whining voice.” Then walk a few steps away. Turn around, look at the child, and say, “But I will listen to your nice voice.”

If the child talks without whining, say, “Good! I like to hear your nice voice,” and talk with him about his question or statement. If the child answers with a whine, tell him again, “I won’t listen to your whining voice.”

- “I can’t understand what you are saying when you whine. Please tell me without whining.”

If the child talks without whining, say, “Good! Now I can understand you,” and talk with him about his question or statement. If the child answers with a whine, tell him again, “I can’t understand what you are saying when you whine.”

**Stop whining
at the first whimper.**

DON’T LET WHINING WEAR YOU DOWN

Stop whining at the first whimper. As soon as you hear that awful voice, tell her to stop. Letting the whining go on and on will only wear you down. Once a child learns that you won’t listen to whining, it will stop. You may end up giving the child what she wanted in the first place when she can ask for it without whining.



Pennsylvania Pathways

Professional Development
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Sources: familyeducation.com, “A Practical Guide to Solving Preschool Behavior Problems,” by E. Essa

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