



Discipline Tips for Infants and Toddlers

Two-year-old Juan has found that turning your TV on and off is a lot of fun. If someone leaves the remote control sitting out, he finds it and keeps pushing the buttons. If you take the remote away, he'll walk up to the TV and start pushing buttons. This is driving you crazy! What would you do?

Would you:

- A. Take the remote away and put Juan in time out?
- B. Pull Juan away from the TV and tell him "No" every time he goes near it?

C. Put Juan in a play pen so he can't go near the TV?

D. Try something else?

Discipline for very young children can be tricky. They are exploring and trying new things. They are too young to understand a lot of reasoning, but they need limits to keep them safe.

Here are some discipline tips that work well with young children.

Prevent problems. Do you feel like you're always saying, "No, No, No," to a young child? Think about what she is doing when you tell her "No." Is she touching something she shouldn't or moving to an area that isn't safe? Can these problems be prevented?

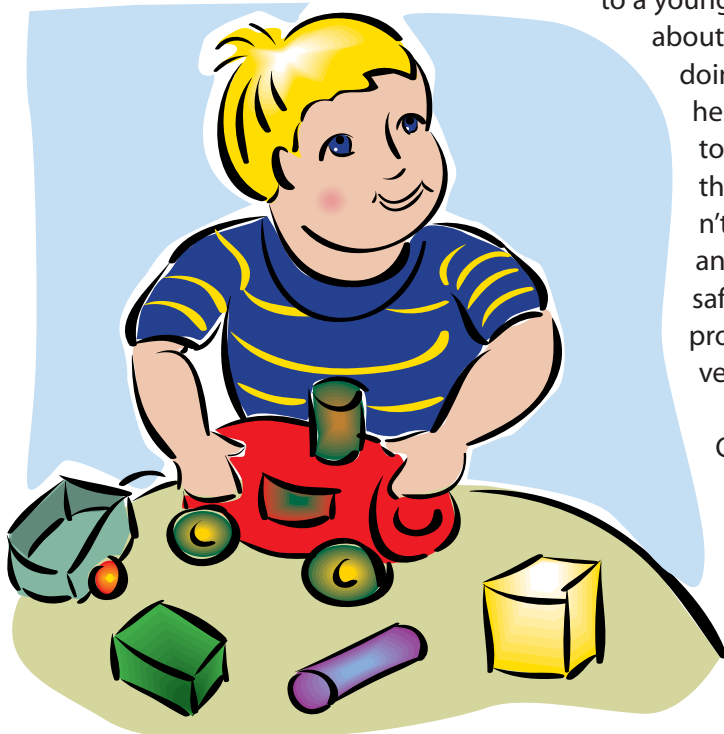
Crawl around the floor on your hands and knees. What can you reach that would be a "No-No" for

Try to prevent problems —
Get a child interested in something else.

a young child? Move all those things up out of the way. Now you don't have to worry about a child getting them.

Some people keep their special things out, within the reach of young children. They think that telling a young child, "No, don't touch," over and over will teach the child to stay away from these things. This is hard for both the child and the adult. Young children want to explore to learn more about things. Touch is one way to do this. It's a lot easier on the child and you if special things are put up where a child can't reach them and you won't have to worry about them getting broken.

If you don't want a child to climb on the stairs, put a gate in place. Shut the door or put a gate across the doorways of rooms where children shouldn't go.



The next time a child does something wrong, think if there are ways this problem could be prevented in the future. Preventing problems makes your day easier.

Try to ignore some behaviors. If a child unrolls a roll of toilet paper, ask yourself, "Is he really hurting anyone or anything?" If your answer is no, this may be a time to take a deep breath and choose to ignore the behavior. If you give too much attention to these times, the child may want to do this again and again just to get your attention. Save your discipline for when he does something that may hurt him or others.

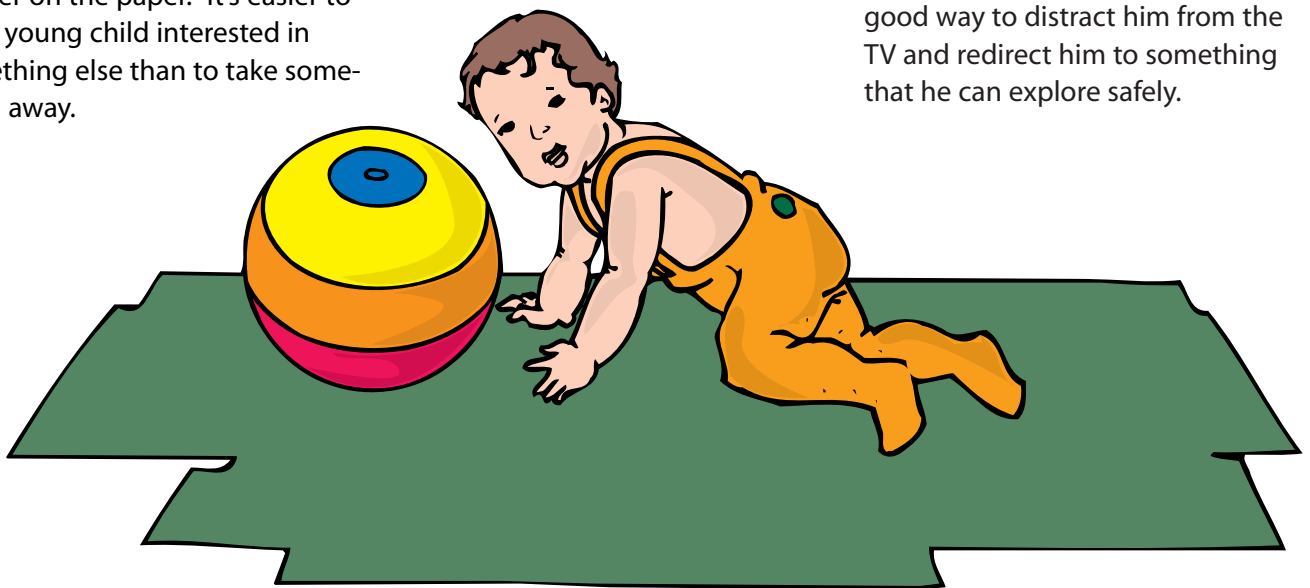
Distract or redirect young children from things you don't want them to do. If a child has a marker and she's starting to write on the wall, don't grab the marker out of her hand. Instead, put some paper on the table or floor and tell her, "Sarah, come over here to use your marker on the paper." It's easier to get a young child interested in something else than to take something away.

When you're getting a child interested in something else, think about what she's doing and find a safe way to try that activity. For example, if a child keeps climbing on and off a table, think about a safe way for her to climb. Maybe you could take everyone outside so she can spend some time climbing up the ladder to a low sliding board. If a child starts throwing blocks, think about what and where he can safely throw. Tell him, "It isn't safe to throw the blocks. Someone could get hurt. Come over and throw these bean bags into the basket." If a child likes to drop food on the floor from her chair, she's probably finished eating, but dropping things is a lot of fun. Put her down on the floor and give her some clothespins or blocks to drop in a plastic container. Show her how to dump them out and drop them in the container again and again.

Reward children for being good.

Reward children when they are playing nicely. Too often adults notice only when a child is doing something wrong. Watch for children being good and let them know it with a smile, a hug, or a few words of praise. "You are being so gentle with the doll." Children want to please you. Giving them smiles, pats on the back, hugs, and kind words are the best rewards.

Back to Juan and the TV problem. What can you do with a child who likes to turn the TV on and off? Putting the remote control away is a good start. If your TV is kept in a cabinet with doors, you could prevent the problem by closing the doors. Did you think about Juan's interest in pushing buttons? Do you have a toy with push buttons for Juan to try? This would be a good way to distract him from the TV and redirect him to something that he can explore safely.



Pennsylvania Pathways

Professional Development
for Child Caregivers

PENNSYLVANIA



Cooperative Extension
College of Agricultural Sciences

Developed by Lyn Horning, Better Kid Care Program

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director

Developed by Penn State Better Kid Care Program

253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA 16801 • Phone: 1-800-452-9108 • Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu

Sources: "Five Keys to Good Discipline with Infants," by Dave Riley, University of Minnesota Extension Service; www.zerotothree.org

Supported by funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Pennsylvania Pathways Program.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its work force.