

Time-in and Time-out

Why use it?



When toddlers and preschoolers are struggling with their emotions or how to behave, you can use **TIME-IN** or **TIME-OUT** together with other parenting tactics like **emotion coaching** and **social rewards** to get things back on track.

You can guide children back to calm feelings and good behaviors.

WHEN TO USE IT

TIME-IN can help calm a child who is in emotional distress like a meltdown.

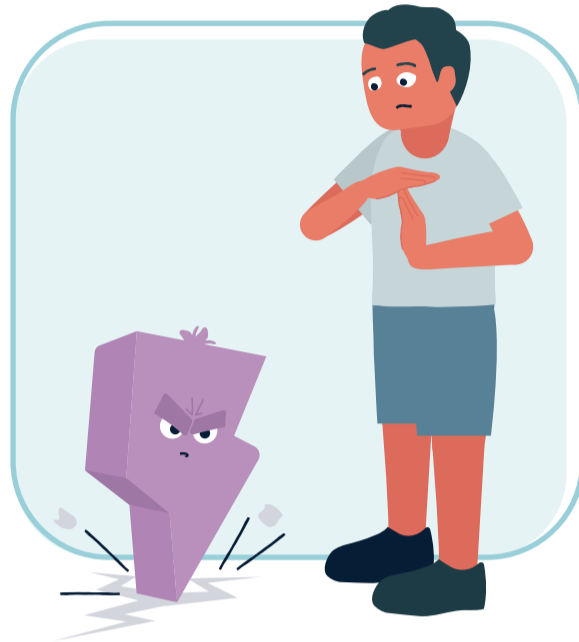


This strategy involves staying with your child during challenging emotional moments to provide support and help them navigate difficult feelings.

Use **TIME-IN** when your child:

- Is feeling upset, anxious, or overwhelmed.
- Needs help managing their emotions.

TIME-OUT can help a child who is struggling with disruptive or harmful behaviors.



This strategy involves providing a safe space for your child to calm down without distractions so they can learn better behaviors.

Use **TIME-OUT** when your child:

- Shows forms of physical aggression like pushing, hitting, or throwing things.
- Refuses to follow rules or directions and has ignored a warning.

HOW TO USE IT

TIME-IN

Observe and respond when your child shows emotional distress.

1

Notice and Respond

Name the emotion and help your child recognize and manage it.

2

Affirm and Explain

Sit with your child, offer support and comfort while they calm down.

3

Cool down

Reassure your child that you are there for them through your words and actions.

4

Finish up

When your child is calm, follow up with emotion coaching or active listening.

5

Follow up

TIME-OUT

Notice the misbehavior and calmly give a time-out warning. If the misbehavior continues, follow-through with the time-out.

Tell your child they are going to time-out and explain why.

Guide your child to a nearby space to sit or stand, away from where the misbehavior happened. Reassure them that you will return when it's time for them to get out. Give one minute of time-out for every year of the child's age.

End time-out after two to four minutes. Then remind your child of the behavior you expect.

Praise the next good thing they do.

More Resources

To learn more, please visit cdc.gov/parenting-toddlers

