



# Toddler Behavior

Virtual Parenting Hub - Online advice, support, and guidance empowering parents to work through challenges and find solutions.



# Toddler Behavior

Challenging behavior is common at this age, toddlers do not have the communication, emotional or social skills to behave in a way you would like them to.

Toddlers express their emotions in many ways and their behavior is often a response to feeling angry, anxious, overwhelmed, tired or hungry.

It is important to support your toddler while they are learning to manage their emotions and build on their language skills. Staying calm, positive and encouraging your toddler will help them learn ways to manage their behaviour appropriately.

## Key Points

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- It is normal for toddlers to have tantrums and behave in a negative way when they are learning communication, emotional and social skills
- Staying calm and positive is better than reacting at your toddler
- Encourage, ignore, distract, and teach empathy to guide your toddler's behaviour
- Focus on and praise your toddler's good behaviours
- Be consistent with age appropriate consequences
- Smacking, shouting, or isolating your toddler is harmful



# Normal Toddler behaviours

- Hitting
- Kicking
- Biting
- Winging
- Screaming
- Defiance
- Refusal
- Hitting self on the head or hitting head on the floor
- Tantrums
- Fussiness
- Pulling hair
- Shyness





**Strategies to help Toddler  
Behavior**

# 1. Distraction

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- Introduce a new game or give your toddler a different toy
- Suggest a puzzle or drawing
- Change the scene, inside to outside
- Sing a song
- Think ahead for other activities to do
- If you are out, take some toys or food to occupy your toddler
- Change the topic of conversation

## 2. Ignoring

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- Ignore negative behaviour, (not ignore your toddler)
- Do not look at or talk to your toddler when they are displaying negative behaviour
- When the negative behaviour stops, look, and talk to your toddler and praise them for what they are doing well
- The reward is the parent's attention

# 3. Encouraging Empathy

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- Tell your toddler how their hitting for example is making the other person feel (Sad, hurt)
- Ask your toddler how they would be feeling if another person was hitting them



## 4. Praising/ Positive reinforcement

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- Praise the good behaviours your toddler is displaying
- Focus on the good behaviour rather than giving attention to negative behaviours
- Be a role model for your toddler, they are learning by watching you

# 5. Time-In

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- This strategy is to help your toddler calm down, not to learn a new behaviour
- Stay close to your toddler, hold their hand, or hug them
- Let your toddler know that you understand how they feel
- Firmly and calmly stop your toddler for example, throwing toys or hitting. Put the toys up out of reach or hold your toddlers' hand so they cannot hit
- When your toddler calms down you could say "Did you throw the toy because you were angry? "What else could you have done"?"

# 6. Reward Chart

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- Use a reward chart to help change your toddler's behaviour
- Use a poster or A4 paper, your toddler gets to put stickers or ticks on it when they have displayed positive behaviour
- Use an App which could have stars appear when there has been positive behaviour
- Reward charts work well for 3-5 years old

# 7. Consequences for negative Behaviour

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- If your toddler is displaying negative behaviour, give them a warning to stop that behaviour
- If the negative behaviour continues, you need to have an age appropriate consequence
- You can say “stop throwing your car or it will need to be packed up”
- Follow through with the consequence

A graphic consisting of two overlapping rounded rectangular shapes in shades of pink. The top shape is a lighter pink and contains the text. The bottom shape is a darker pink and is partially obscured by the top one. There are two circular elements: one in the top-left corner of the top shape and one in the bottom-right corner of the bottom shape.

## When to see your Doctor

If your child's behaviour is extreme, ongoing, affecting your family or if you feel like it is hard to cope, see your **Doctor** for support and discuss whether a referral to a **Paediatrician** is required.

# References

1. [rch.org.au](http://rch.org.au)
2. [raisingchildren.net.au](http://raisingchildren.net.au)