

## Time-Out

### What is Time-Out?

Time-Out is a safe and very effective form of discipline. When kids have to take a Time-Out, they do not get caregiver attention and they are not allowed to do anything fun or interesting. Just sitting in a chair might not sound like much of a discipline, but it is, especially for younger children. Once you get the hang of it, it works extremely well.

### What Kinds of Behaviors Should I use Time-Out for?

Use it for pretty serious behaviors like:

Not obeying	Threatening People
Angry arguing	Being mean to people or animals
Breaking or throwing things	Swearing
Hitting	Doing dangerous behaviors

### First Steps to Take:

Set up House Rules:

Your child should know exactly what behaviors are not allowed and will earn them a time out.

Focus on behaviors that are a problem now; choose no more than 3.

Choose a Time-Out Place:

1. Use a well-lit and small area. Start off with stairs or a chair facing a corner. Other possibilities are: bathroom, bedroom, utility room, walk-in closet (lights on).
2. Fun-proof the Time-Out place: there should be no fun, interesting things to do or look at (e.g., TV, video games).
3. Remove dangers (e.g., clear out breakable objects, unsafe materials such as cleaning products or medicines in bathroom).

### How to tell your child about Time Out:

Before using Time-Out, explain the rules to your child when he or she is not in trouble or doing the behavior you want to stop. Your counselor can show you or coach you before you do it, or you can do it yourself. Below is an example of what to say:

To the child: *“You are going to be big helper in the family if you follow directions the first time and if you stick to the House Rules. Today you are not in trouble, I am just going to show you what the steps to Time-Out are when you don’t follow directions or you break a House Rule.*

*For practice, see the chair in the corner? That is the Time-Out place. I'm going to use this stuffed animal to show you how to be a good listener. For example, I will tell Mr. Stuffie to do something. "Please hand me the red block." See, Mr. Stuffie listened right away so he doesn't have to go to the Time-Out place; he can stay here and play. Now I'm going to give Mr. Stuffie another command and this time he is not going to listen. "Mr. Stuffie please pick up the red cars and put them in the box." Mr. Stuffie didn't listen. Oh No! Mr. Stuffie didn't listen. "Mr. Stuffie, if you don't pick up the red cars and put them in the box, then you will take a Time-Out". I am giving him one more chance to listen. "You didn't do what I told you to do; now you will have to go to Time-Out." If Mr. Stuffie broke a House Rule he doesn't get one more chance to listen, he goes straight to Time-Out.*

For the parent: Get up and take Mr. Stuffie over to the Time-Out place. Say as you back away: "Stay here until I say you can get up". Stick to the script, walk away quickly. When Mr. Stuffie stays in Time Out for 3 minutes with at least 5 seconds being quiet as a mouse, he can get out. If Mr. Stuffie breaks a House Rule then he doesn't get another chance to listen, he goes straight to Time-Out. If he didn't follow a command he will have to do what he was told after Time-Out or go back to Time-Out. If Mr. Stuffie leaves the chair, he'll go back to Time Out.

#### **Doing Time-Out at home:**

1. Make sure your child knows where the Time-Out place is and when Time-Out will be used (not obeying, breaking a House Rule).
2. Once you start the process, be prepared to keep following the plan no matter what. Do not argue, explain, scold or lecture. Just do it.
3. When the child disobeys or breaks a House Rule, calmly say: "you have to go to Time-Out until I say you can get out", and firmly lead them to the Time-Out place.
4. The child must stay in Time-Out for 3 minutes (use a timer); then wait for 5 seconds of quiet.
5. Do not talk or engage at all with your child while he or she is in Time-Out. This is very important—keep an eye on your child but otherwise do not give any attention. This means no talking to the child, no scolding, no eye contact, and keeping your face calm.
6. Once the time is up, go silently to Time-Out and lead the child out. If the child disobeyed a direction/command, say, "Are you ready to do what I told you?" If the child does not do it, start the Time-Out over.

#### **Keep in mind. Giving clear instructions is very important.**

1. One instruction at a time
2. Say what you want in the positive ("please keep your hands to yourself") if you can. Sometimes you have to say what you do NOT want such as when the problem is hitting or kicking—to make the rule very clear to young children. So in addition to stating the positive goal, define as, "that means, no hitting or kicking."

3. Get the child's attention (be in the same room, make eye contact, kneel down)
4. Give one warning if you just gave an instruction or direction (ex., "please put the blocks away") and allow 5 seconds for the child to obey. Note: do not give a warning if the child broke a house rule (ex., hit a sibling)—for breaking house rules the child goes straight to Time-Out.

### **Time-Out Problems:**

Question: *What if my child is crying, begging, saying she has to go to the bathroom, threatening, swearing, or making mean statements?*

- Answer: *Ignore it. Your child is invisible unless he or she comes out of Time-Out. (If you really ignore these behaviors, your child eventually will stop doing them).*

Question: *What if my child keeps coming out of Time-Out before the time is up?*

- Answer: *Repeat the procedure anytime your child leaves Time-Out.*
  - a. *Warning - Say "you didn't stay in Time-Out like I told you. If you get out of the chair (room, etc) again you will have to go back until I say you can get out of Time-Out."*
  - b. *Back to Time Out "Stay here until I say you can get out" and walk away. After 3 minutes and 5 seconds of quiet in the Time Out place ask "Are you ready to do what I told you to?"*
  - c. *Compliance after- Have the child follow the command right after getting out of Time Out.*

Question: *But I get so upset I worry I might lose it!*

- Answer: *Turn away from the child; do calming breathing, make calming statements to yourself, think about or imagine something positive. Walk away for 30 seconds to a minute to calm down if you need to. A calm parent is a parent who is in control.*

Time Out really works when the steps are followed. Most important is really making it a Time Out from your attention (even the negative!) and from fun and interesting activities. Children will often test to find out if you really mean it and are going to follow through, so be prepared once you start to follow through and stick with it. Good luck!