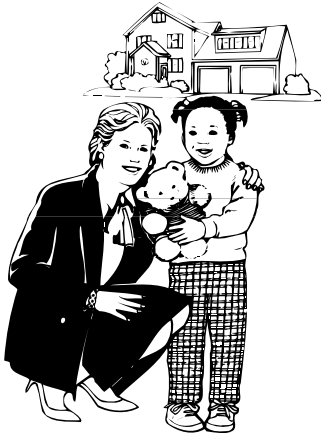




Setting Limits with Your Children

Establishing and maintaining appropriate limits is an important part of safeguarding your children and helping them grow to be responsible and confident.

As your children go through different ages and experiences with the outside world, you may find there are some phases when everything goes smoothly, and other phases in which guiding their behavior is more challenging. The following checklist may help you to stay on track or to fine-tune your approach to setting and enforcing limits for your children.



- **Are your family rules simple?** Avoid having too many rules or rules that are complicated. Identify rules that are necessary for your child's safety (e.g., do not leave school with anyone other than the carpool), for getting along with others (e.g., no hurtful words or actions), and for helping your children learn to be a responsible member of the household (e.g., clean up at the end of play).
- **Have you talked to your children about the rules?** They may seem obvious to you, but do not assume children understand a rule if you have not talked with them about what you expect. Include

discussion of the reason for the rule (e.g., their safety or respect for the rights of others) not just what not to do.

- **Have you talked to your children about the consequences of breaking a rule?** Decide when you make a rule what the consequence will be if it is broken. Be sure you identify consequences you can stick with. Provide your children with a simple explanation of consequences when you discuss the rule with them. Then follow through if they break it.
- **Do you enforce rules calmly?** A well-thought out rule and consequence should be effective without any additional scolding from the parent. Enforcing rules harshly or with anger will not help your children learn cooperation and self-control.
- **Do your children participate in making family rules?** It is hard for anyone—child or adult—to be a part of a group in which there is no opportunity to express opinions. Involving children in setting family rules helps them learn valuable skills for negotiating, solving problems, and getting along with others.

Source: Ashcroft, E., *Making Realistic, Acceptable Rules*. MAPP, National Family Database, Penn State University.

A Nature Walk Together

A nature walk can be a real adventure for you and your child. Together you can find lots of interest in a nearby park or even your own backyard.

Plan a time when you can go slow, taking the time to observe the environment. Let your child's interests guide your pace—the goal in a nature walk is to observe and explore whatever you find interesting, not to cover a lot of ground or to provide a science lecture to your child. Talk together about what you see—encourage your child to share his or her observations.

Observe with all your senses—notice textures, sounds and smells along with the sights.

During winter, look for tracks in the snow or other signs of birds and animals. In warmer weather, take a hula hoop with you—place the hoop on the ground and together study all that you find inside it.

Plan to make a record of your walk when you and your child return home. Together you can write in a journal or make a poster about what you observed. Take a camera with you and use photographs from your walk to illustrate your words. Or make pictures together of what you saw.

Turn your nature walk into a study of the seasons by returning to the same location across different seasons.

Contact your County Extension office for more information on limit setting and discipline strategies



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