







Guiding Your Preschooler

Loving preschool children is easy. Disciplining isn't so simple. In this adaptation from *Raising Good Kids: A Developmental Approach to Discipline* (Modern Learning Press), a renowned child development specialist suggests discipline techniques for each stage of development. Dr. Ames notes, "Contrary to popular belief, discipline does not mean punishment. Parents discipline nearly all the time simply by the way they behave

to all the other members of the family."

Generally speaking, ages 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 tend to be periods of "equilibrium," or comfortable ages. Ages 18 months, 2 1/2, 3 1/2, and 4 1/2 tend to be periods of "disequilibrium," or uncomfortable ages. Our chart addresses these more difficult stages. (Keep in mind that a demanding stage will be followed by an easy one!)

Age	Developmental Stage	Discipline Techniques
18 months	 <p>Your formerly docile baby may now become insistent and demanding. "No" is a favorite word; your child has no interest in pleasing you and often responds by doing the opposite of what you've requested. Tantrums loom if his or her demands aren't met immediately.</p>	It's not necessary at this age to make a child "obey" you in the conventional sense; your aim is simply to get your toddler smoothly through the day. Get to know your child's frustration level, and be ready with plenty of distractions. To avoid frustration, keep playthings simple and use safety gates to keep hazardous items out of reach.
2 1/2	 <p>This is an age of opposite extremes, including both aggression and withdrawal. Your formerly calm two-year-old can't seem to make a choice or stick to it once it's made. A child of this age loves repetition and rituals and may have trouble making transitions from one activity to another.</p>	Establish a bedtime routine, and try to avoid sudden changes in schedule. Offer simple choices, when appropriate, but don't phrase questions in a way that can be answered "no." (If you must leave now, don't ask your child, "Are you ready to go?") Talk and work fast, so your child will do what you want before she has time to think about it and rebel.
3 1/2	 <p>After a period at age three of contentment and great strides in language development comes a stage of physical and verbal uncertainty. Your child may seem hard to handle and express many fears. At this age, children behave better with almost anyone other than their parents!</p>	Pick your battles. Make heavy use of "Let's," rather than giving orders or making ultimatums. Talk with your child about his fears but don't force him into situations that frighten him. Defuse tension with humor. Both parent and child will benefit from some time apart during the day (preschool, a regular baby-sitter, etc.).
4 1/2	 <p>Fours have boundless energy and thrive on being as defiant as possible. They may have trouble distinguishing real from make-believe. Their silliness and roughness can make them difficult to handle. But hang in—you've almost made it to five, labeled the "golden age" by Dr. Arnold Gesell.</p>	Fours like and respect boundaries and limits. They also respond well to praise and plenty of conversation. Try to keep your child interested and excited in positive ways, so there's no need for out-of-bounds behavior. When correcting your child, whispering may be more effective than shouting; it calms the child and catches his or her attention.

Louise Bates Ames, Ph.D., studied with Dr. Arnold Gesell at the Yale Clinic of Child Development and co-founded the Gesell Institute. She is co-author of the best-selling *Ages and Stages* series of books on child development (Modern Learning Press).