

# Choosing Effective Consequences for Your Child's Behavior

## What to Know

A consequence is what happens immediately after a child's behavior and can be positive or negative. **Positive consequences** show your child they have done something that pleases you. Your child is more likely to repeat the behavior when you use positive consequences. You would give a positive consequences when a child does her homework on time, shows good manners, does something kind for someone else.

**Negative consequences** help eliminate a child's inappropriate behaviors. You would use a negative consequence if a child talks back to you, fights with a sibling, deliberately disobeys household rules.

Both types of consequences are important in raising a happy, responsible, resilient child.

However, it is important to note that physical punishment like spanking a child, is generally ineffective, and is not part of a positive discipline model. Physical punishment does not bring about long-term change because children physical punishment typically causes shame, embarrassment, and resentment. Physical punishment can harm the relationship you have with your child and lead to the following:

1. Fear and resentment
2. Child behaving only when you are around
3. Child hurting others
4. Reduced confidence and self-esteem
5. Child builds up tolerance to pain, resulting in parent's escalation
6. Insecure parent/child attachment

The intent of positive discipline is to train a child in positive, pro-social behaviors. When you choose consequences ahead of time:

- you are more likely to be fair.
- your child knows what to expect.
- the consequence fits the misbehavior.
- you can teach missing skills to help your child improve long-term behavior.

Effective negative consequences include a "response cost"—the time, effort, or resources the child needs to give up to make things right.

Effective consequences are:

- Mild—does not cause physical or emotional harm
- Kind—does not involve anger, yelling, humiliation, or threats
- Logical—results logically from the misbehavior

- Instructive—involves practicing the missing skill
- Understood—agreed upon beforehand
- Simple to give and track (e.g. a Chores Jar and Tracking Sheet)
- Consistent—negative behavior results in negative consequence
- Loving—followed by a sincere expression of affection
- Safe—never violates a child’s basic human rights to food, shelter, emotional and physical safety, love, or education

## What to Do

Complete the following Consequences Chart and post it where family members can see it. As a family, discuss negative behaviors, expectations, and consequences. Write them in the spaces below.

### Examples of Effective Consequences

- **Positive practice**—practice the missing social skill that led to the misbehavior
- **Extra chores**—choose a chore from the Chore Jar
- **Time out**—effective for kids ages 2–12
- **Make it right**—apologize and fix the mistake
- **Grounding from privileges or possessions for a short time (6–24 hours)**—until the child does positive practice or makes it right.

Minor Issues	Medium Transgressions	Major Offenses
Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Consequence	Consequence	Consequence
Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Consequence	Consequence	Consequence
Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Consequence	Consequence	Consequence

Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Consequence	Consequence	Consequence
Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Consequence	Consequence	Consequence
Behavior	Behavior	Behavior
Consequence	Consequence	Consequence
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