

The Alternative to Smacking Checklist

How to avoid smacking and some practical alternatives.



Sue Atkins
The Parenting Expert

The Alternative to Smacking Checklist

How to avoid smacking and some practical alternatives.

1. The secret is to PLAN AHEAD.

Pre-empt misbehaviour, mistakes, challenges and being tested & expect them!

Come up with your own behaviour management plan so you won't smack in the heat of the moment.

Some parents smack because they don't know what else to do when they're at the end of their tether & kids DO push our buttons. But if you decide not to smack (no matter what) & you have a strategy in mind when it comes to managing your child's behaviour, it will stop those knee-jerk reactions and limit the chances of you resorting to smacking, hitting, yelling aggressively or slapping your child in temper.

By confidently knowing that if your child does x, you will say or do y, you're less likely to fall back on shouting, smacking or saying something that simply won't work, or not following through – which is disastrous for your child's long term positive behaviour!

You're also less likely to fall back on that old chestnut of Father Christmas won't bring you any presents if you do that again! Also being firm, fair & consistent is the name of the game as your child will know what to expect and that will create a feeling of security for them – as children thrive with firm, fair, consistent boundaries. They become anxious around chaos and confusion.

2. Know Your Rules.

Get a piece of paper & a pen & fold it in half.

On one side write:

Things That Are Acceptable & on the other Things That Are NOT Acceptable.

Now spend some time writing down your rules or family values.

E.g. Speak respectfully to each other, listen to each other, help each other, put toys away after playing with them, put socks in the wash basket.

Try & keep your rules in positive language but be clear on no spitting, hitting or punching.

Then next step is to have a coffee with your partner & get them to do exactly the same.

Now chat through your rules & discuss differences.

Once you have agreed them – have a family chat around the dinner table where you ‘Talk & Teach’ your children your ‘House Rules’

Get them to write, or print, & illustrate them. Pop your House Rules up in your kitchen to remind everyone!

Keep it SIMPLE!

No more than 8 Rules.

3. Consequences

Children are either motivated TOWARDS something – like a sticker or an extra story at bedtime or AWAY from something – like taking away their mobile phone, or removing a privilege.

Work out which way your child is motivated (& kids in the same family can be different) & you’ll have a simple but effective strategy to discipline your kids.

Be confident & consistent & you’ve cracked it!

4. Be mindful to catch them doing the RIGHT thing.

So many parents focus on what their kids get wrong. This demoralises a child & they give up, or feel hopeless. It also damages their self-esteem.

Deliberately catch your child doing the right thing, trying hard or sticking with something & don’t forget to tell them & watch them bloom, blossom and thrive!

Remember verbal encouragement is also very powerful – saying ‘Well done for being so patient with your brother’ is a great way to encourage a child to continue that behaviour.

Remember that a quick hug or smile can also encourage your child to do the right thing.

5. Press Your Imaginary Pause Button.

First, if you feel angry and out of control and you want to smack or slap your child, pretend that you have an imaginary remote control zapper in your hands. Press the PAUSE Button & take a PHYSICAL step back.

This detaches you from the situation for a split second & that helps you to be aware of what you’re about to do or say. It freeze frames the situation.

Take a deep breath.

Calm down, get grounded and go quiet. In that quiet time you will often find an alternative or solution to the problem. It's easy to 'lose it' when the kids are fighting, the phone is ringing and dinner is burning. Consciously pressing your Pause Button gives you a split second to compose yourself.

Leave the room if it's appropriate & calmly say, "I'll be in the next room when you want to talk more respectfully."

6. Me Time

You are more likely to smack when you haven't had any time to yourself and you are running on empty or stressed. Lots of Mums feel guilty if they have 'Me Time' but it's REALLY important, that you take time out to replenish & recuperate your energy and recharge your batteries. You'll come back more patient and with a fresh perspective. So, what do you enjoy doing? You have my permission to exercise, read a trashy magazine or book, take a walk or have a bath with scented candles. You'll be less stressed, more relaxed and more patient.

7. Be Kind but Firm

Another frustrating situation where you may smack is when your child hasn't listened to your repeated requests to behave. After the 100th time you may snap to get your child to act appropriately.

Instead get down on your child's level, make eye contact, touch them gently and tell them, in a short sentence & a kind but firm voice, with confident body language what you want them to do. Be very specific. For example, "I want you to play without shouting or snatching."

5 – Use Logical Consequences

Consequences that are logically related to the behavior help teach children responsibility. For example, your child breaks a neighbor's window and you punish him by spanking him. What does he learn about the situation? He may learn to never do that again, but he also learns that he needs to hide his mistakes, blame it on someone else, lie, or simply not get caught. He may decide that he is bad or feel anger and revenge toward the parent who spanked him. When you spank a child, he may behave because he is afraid to get hit again.

However, do you want your child to behave because he is afraid of you or because he respects you?

Compare that situation to a child who breaks a neighbor's window and his parent says, "I see you've broken the window, what will you do to repair it?" using a kind but firm tone of voice. The child decides to mow the neighbor's lawn and wash his car several times to repay the cost of breaking the window. What does the child learn in this situation? That mistakes are an inevitable part of life and it isn't so important that he made the mistake but that he takes responsibility to repair the mistake. The focus is taken off the mistake and put on taking responsibility for repairing it. The child feels no anger or revenge toward his parent. And most importantly the child's self-esteem is not damaged.

6 – Do Make Ups

When children break agreements, parents tend to want to punish them. An alternative is to have your child do a make-up. A make-up is something that people do to put themselves back into integrity with the person they broke the agreement with. For example, several boys were at a sleep-over at Larry's home. His father requested that they not leave the house after midnight. The boys broke their agreement. The father was angry and punished them by telling them they couldn't have a sleep-over for two months. Larry and his friends became angry, sullen and uncooperative as a result of the punishment. The father realized what he had done. He apologized for punishing them and told them how betrayed he felt and discussed the importance of keeping their word. He then asked the boys for a make-up. They decided to cut the lumber that the father needed to have cut in their backyard. The boys became excited and enthusiastic about the project and later kept their word on future sleep-overs.

8 – Use kind but firm action

Instead of smacking an infant's hand or bottom when she touches something she isn't supposed to, kindly but firmly pick her up and take her to the next room. Offer her a toy or another item to distract her and say, "You can try again later." You may have to take her out several times if she is persistent.

9 – Inform Children Ahead of Time

A child's temper tantrum can easily set a parent off. Children frequently throw tantrums when they feel uninformed or powerless in a situation. Instead of telling your child he has to leave his friend's house at a moment's notice, tell him that you will be leaving in five minutes. This allows the child to complete what he was in the process of doing.

Aggression is an obvious form of perpetuating violence in society. A more subtle form of this is spanking because it takes its toll on a child's self-esteem, dampening his enthusiasm and causing him to be rebellious and uncooperative. Consider for a moment the vision of a family that knows how to win cooperation and creatively solve their problems without using force or violence. The alternatives are limitless and the results are calmer parents who feel more supported.

<https://www.sueatkinsparentingcoach.com/2017/01/the-alternative-to-smacking-checklist/>

3. Naughty step/ time out

Rewarding is effective but we still need to discipline when children behave badly or else they realise they can get away with it. This classic Supernanny technique is a great way of calming things down if they're shouty or being aggressive. It gives your child chance to reflect on what they've done wrong.

To make Time Out work, give your child a warning when they're misbehaving – this needs to be clear and you should use an authoritative, calm voice. Explain what they're doing wrong briefly and in appropriate language for their age and warn them that if they don't stop, they'll go to the naughty step (or whatever your equivalent is).

If they do continue the undesirable behaviour, put them on the step immediately, and ensure they stay there for one minute for each year of their age – so three minutes for a three-year-old for example. Remind them of why they are there. If they move away from the step, keep calmly but firmly returning them to it, so they know you mean business. This can be hard work initially but before long they should get the message.

At the end of the allotted time, explain again what they did wrong, ask for an apology and give them a hug. Watch out though because some children use the naughty step as a way of

4. Removal of privileges

If you can understand what motivates your child, it works well to then use this to encourage optimal behaviour. For many children nowadays, this will be screen time. So employ this to your advantage and reduce their TV/ Internet allowance if they don't follow house rules.

Other variations on this are cutting older kids' pocket money or setting up special privileges that are specifically designed for discipline. You could start a weekly film evening and let your child pick the film but only if they have behaved well that week, or cancel the film session altogether if they've been really below par.

Which discipline methods work best in your house? Come and tell us on the Official Supernanny Facebook page

