

One-page summary: Toddlers (1-3 years)

What's normal at this age

- Hitting, biting and pushing rise in the second year and start to fall after the third birthday.
- Most toddlers use some physical aggression. Only 28% use little or none.
- In a study of preschoolers, ordinary tantrums tended to follow frustration. The worrying kind were unpredictable, very long or destructive.
- Recommended sleep at 1-2 years: 11-14 hours in 24 hours, naps included.

What works, and why

- A short list of firm limits, held calmly every time.
- Redirect: offer something they are allowed to do instead.
- Two small choices you are happy with either way.
- Stay close and calm in a tantrum. Talk once it has passed.
- Notice and praise what goes well.
- A short, same-every-night bedtime routine.

What backfires

- Giving in once the screaming starts. Keep the limit and offer comfort.
- Lectures and bargaining in the middle of a meltdown.
- Hitting, slapping or biting back. In its 2018 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics advises against all corporal punishment.
- Yelling and shaming: minimally effective now and not effective later, says the American Academy of Pediatrics in its 2018 policy statement.

Things you can say

"I won't let you hit. Hitting hurts."

"Blocks stay on the floor. Let's throw the ball outside."

"Do you want to walk to the bath or hop like a bunny?"

"Shoes on first, then we go out."

"You're really angry. I'm right here."

"You can be mad. The answer is still no."