# ‘Give it Time’ – Tips for guiding children’s behaviour

# <https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour>



**All children are unique and respond differently. These ideas will encourage positive behaviour and boost your child’s confidence.**

Here are five ideas that have been shown to work to help you develop a good relationship with your child.

These ideas will also encourage positive behaviour, boost your child’s confidence and support them during each stage of their development.

All children are unique and will respond differently. If you try these ideas together and give them enough time to work they should help you manage your child’s behaviour better. Don’t give up if things don’t get better straight away. It will take time to adjust to your new approach, so try to be patient and positive. If you keep going you both should see an improvement.

All parents find some behaviour difficult to manage and all children show difficult behaviour some of the time. It’s not easy to change the way you do things. Nobody gets it right all the time so don’t be too hard on yourself – nobody is perfect.

Remember your child isn’t perfect either. A lot of the behaviour you may think of as naughty may actually be normal for your child's age and stage of development.

# Make time to create order and structure to your day (suitable for ages 2-7)

# <https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-to-create-order-and-structure-to-your-day>

**Children will test the limits, that's how they will learn what is right and wrong.**

Don’t worry when young children test the limits. That’s how they learn what is right and wrong. It is perfectly normal but it can test our patience! It can help if you have regular routines and some family rules.

You can help create order and structure to your day with consistent routines and family rules. Things are more likely to go smoothly when you and your child know what to expect.

* **Routines will help your child feel safe and know what to expect.** Your child will like getting into a regular pattern and knowing what’s coming up. You can make routines for young children around meals, snacks and sleep times. A bedtime routine might be taking a bath, brushing teeth, getting into bed, reading a story and then turning off (or dimming) the lights. For older children it could be explaining the night before that they have school or nursery the next day, who will drop them off and pick them up and what will happen when they get home. Find the routine that works for your family.
* **Within your routine there can be some flexibility.** If it's sunny, why not go for a walk or have your lunch as a picnic. If someone drops in for a chat, take time away from the routine to enjoy their company.
* **Let your child know if a change is coming.** Some children find it frustrating when they have to change from one activity to another without warning. Your child will come to expect and accept change better when they know it’s coming. For example “After breakfast we are going to the shops“, “When you have finished your lunch then it will be time for a nap”, “when we have had a bath then it will be bedtime”.
* **Family rules teach your child what behaviours are acceptable.** Having a routine supports this learning.
* **Keep rules clear and simple, in keeping with your child’s age and ability.** The number of rules you have will depend on your child’s ability to understand and remember. With young children try to focus on two or three rules at any one time. For older children, you can ask them to repeat the rules back to you so that you can clear up any confusion and make them feel supported.
* [**Talk to your child about exactly what you expect of them**](https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/booklets-and-information-sheets-to-support-parents/supporting-and-guiding-childrens-behaviour)**.** Tell and show your child what you want them to do instead of what you don’t want them to do. For example say “Please put your toys in the box” and show them what to do, rather than “don’t leave your toys out”.
* **Try to encourage everyone close to your child to support the rules in the same way.** Problems can happen when parents, grandparents and others close to your child follow different rules. Your child may get confused if they are allowed to do something one day and then told off for doing the same thing the next day.
* **Set rules that work for your child’s age.** Make sure your child is able to do what you expect of them.  If your child is young they won’t be able to sit still for long or never spill a drink. It is normal for young children to be noisy and messy and it is normal for children to try to test the limits and question what is going on! You can adapt your rules as your child get’s older and has the understanding and ability to follow them.
* **Reward and praise your child for following routines and rules.** This makes it more likely that your child will follow the routines and rules in the future.

# Make time to listen, talk and play

# <https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-to-listen>

**Every child is different. When you talk, play and listen you will learn more about them.**

Every child is unique. When you talk, listen and play with your child you will learn more about their needs and interests. This will not only help your child develop well but it will also help you build a strong relationship.

When you have a good relationship with your child it can make you both happy. It will also:

* make your child feel secure and loved, which helps their brains develop;
* help you to overcome difficulties with your child’s eating, sleeping, learning and behaviour.

### Make time to talk and listen to your child

Learning to talk is one of the most important skills that children need to develop before they go to school. Being able to talk and communicate well is proven to help children make friends, learn to read and have better opportunities in life.

**Even in the womb, your baby can hear your voice.** From birth your baby will respond to familiar voices. Your baby is born with a brain that has a huge potential to learn.

**The first two years of your child’s life are very important.** During this time they will learn all the skills needed for talking. These include looking, listening, copying and making early sounds.

**Research tells us that a child’s ability to talk is strongly influenced by how much mums and dads talk to their children.** Talking and responding to your baby and young child as well as singing, playing and reading together will help your babbling baby grow into a happy and healthy talking child.

[**Words for Life**](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/songs) (External link) and **[Mudiad Meithrin](http://www.meithrin.cymru/heno-heno/)** (External link) have lots or ideas for activities to do with your baby or child to encourage them to talk.

[**Cymraeg**](https://gov.wales/cymraeg-education) (External link) has lots of different resources that can help you to use Welsh with your baby, even if you don’t speak the language very well yourself.

### Make time to play everyday

Play is fun for babies and children. It’s also how they learn, and how they work out who they are, how the world works and where they fit into it.

**One of the most important things you can do with your child is play.** The time you spend playing together gives your child lots of different ways and times to learn.

Play also helps your child:

* become more confident
* feel loved, happy and safe
* develop their social skills like sharing and making friends
* learn to talk and communicate
* develop physical skills like holding a pencil, writing, walking, climbing; skipping, hopping
* connect and refine pathways in their brain.

Your child will be happy if they have plenty of time and space to play. You don’t need lots of expensive toys.

### Inexpensive play ideas

* **Newborn** - Although your new-born can't hold toys yet they will still enjoy lots of playful interaction with you. Make faces, smile, laugh and stick out your tongue. Sing nursery rhymes, chat, tickle, count toes or blow raspberries. You can also read to your baby, but hold the book close as newborns can only see close up.
* **Baby** - Give your baby bright and safe things to look at. Blow gently on your baby’s tummy or play pat-a-cake or peek-a-boo. Make some noise together - sing, bash pots and pans and make animal sounds. Share a book - your baby will love spending special time with you.
* **Toddler** - Toddlers love scribbling on paper with crayons, pencils and paints. They usually enjoy playing with water - you can give them empty plastic pots and plastic bottles to play with. Remember to keep a constant eye on your toddler around water. Outdoor play in the garden or park, will give your toddler a chance to let off steam and develop their skills. By the time your toddler is three they will love dressing-up, playing house, and other pretend play. Share a book as this will help your toddler learn to talk.
* **Child 3-5** - Children love playing in cardboard boxes – they can pretend the box is a shop counter, oven, car, boat and doll’s house. They could paste on coloured pictures cut from magazines. They will enjoy dressing-up - use some hand-me-down clothes and bits of fabric. Give your child some coloured paper, stickers, crayons and washable markers.

There’s lots more ideas for play activities and songs on [**Words for Life**](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby) (External link) or **[Mudiad Meithrin](http://www.meithrin.cymru/project-nursery-rhymes/)** (External link). The [**Education Begins at Home Facebook page**](https://www.facebook.com/beginsathome) (External link) also has ideas for things to do at home.

### Help with words and numbers for children aged 0 to 4

Start using words and numbers with your child when they’re born. Building simple, fun activities into your daily routine will help them develop.

It doesn’t have to take long. Just 10 minutes reading every day will give them the best start in life.

#### Reading

* Read together every day.
* Sing, read, and repeat.
* Point out print everywhere.
* Put books where they can be reached.
* Join a local library for **free**.

#### Numbers

* Be positive about numbers.
* Look at shapes, number order and measurements.
* Start talking about time.
* Learn number rhymes and songs, such as 10 green bottles.
* Count as you go about your daily routine.

#### More information (External links)

* [**Education begins at home**](https://www.facebook.com/beginsathome) - Hints and tips on how you can support your child at home and help prepare them for school.
* [**Pori Drwy Stori**](http://poridrwystori.booktrust.org.uk/)
* [**National Numeracy**](http://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/family-maths-toolkit)
* [**Libraries Wales**](https://libraries.wales/)

### Make time for quality time together

Try to have some time together as a family. Use time together, such as mealtimes, to talk and share a laugh. Plan things together like going to the park or beach, having a picnic or visiting a museum. There are lots of activities that are completely free. The Family Information Service will have details of things to do in your area. You can contact them by telephone on 0300 123 7777. [**Family Point**](https://familypoint.cymru/) (External link) also has information on services and activities in your area.

# Take time to model the behaviour you want to see (Suitable from birth)

# <https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/take-time-to-model-the-behaviour-you-want-to-see>

**From the moment they are born, babies and children learn by imitating.**

From the moment they are born, children listen to what you say and watch what you do. Babies and children learn by imitating. By watching how you behave, your child will learn about how to react in similar situations.

You are your child’s role model. Your child will repeat what they’ve heard you say and they’ll imitate what they’ve seen you do.

Tips:

* Show appreciation, love and encouragement through words and affection. Your child will learn to talk and act based on how you talk to them and how you treat them.
* Be polite and respectful when you talk to your child. This will help show your child how to use good manners. For example, when you ask your child to do something you can say "please." When your child does something you like say “thank you”. If you don’t want your child to shout, try to speak quietly and gently yourself. A child won’t understand that hitting or shouting is not allowed if that is what they see you do.
* **Set a good example with your interactions with other people** as your child is likely to copy your style of talking to others and how you treat them.
* **Create family rules that apply to everyone.** If you have a rule or no swearing or no shouting try to encourage everyone in the family to follow it too.
* **Try to eat meals together, at the table.** Eating with your child will encourage them to enjoy food, try new foods, and learn good eating habits.  It is also a great opportunity to chat, and spend time together as a family. Eating together, especially around a table, can also give your child feelings of closeness and comfort. [**Change 4 Life**](https://www.nhs.uk/change4life) (External link) has lots of recipes you could try.
* **Role model an enjoyment of reading** whether it’s a newspaper, magazine or a book. Try to share a book, song or game with your child. Your child will love this special time with you and it will help their development. There are ideas for songs, books and play activities on [**Words for Life**](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk/baby) (External link) and [**Read on. Get on**](http://readongeton.org.uk/) (External link) and [**Education Begins at Home Facebook page**](https://www.facebook.com/beginsathome) (External link).
* **Show a good example by keeping calm when things get stressful.** This will encourage your child to do the same.
* **Let your child see you express and deal with difficult emotions.** “I’m feeling cross. I’m going to take the time to calm down by counting to 10.” When you express your anger without yelling, calling names, or hitting, you will teach your child how to deal with angry feelings without hurting others.
* **Nobody is perfect.** Everyone loses their cool occasionally and says things they are sorry for. It’s okay to say sorry to your child if you’ve got cross. You are showing your child what to do and it will make them feel valued.

# Make time for praise (suitable from birth)

<https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-for-praise>

**Praise helps your child feel good about themselves.**

Praise works better at encouraging the behaviour you want than criticising and punishing your child for problem behaviour. It helps your child feel good about themselves and feel good about you.

Praise is when you tell your baby, toddler or child what you like about them or their behaviour. Praise will also encourage your baby or child to learn new skills. When you praise your child or baby for positive behaviour or learning a new skill, then they’re more likely to repeat it.

Giving praise also helps you build a good relationship with your child, which will make you and your child happier. Research has shown that children who are close, and have a good supportive relationship with their Mum or Dad have higher self-esteem and are more successful in school and beyond.

### Tips for giving praise:

* **Don’t worry about praising your child too much.** Children are much more likely to repeat desirable behaviour when you praise them for doing it. Praise and positive attention will make your child feel loved and valued. They won’t get big-headed or over-confident.
* **Don’t praise your child when they have not earned it.** It may make real praise feel less meaningful.
* **Give your child lots of praise when you see a desirable behaviour.** This helps your child learn what behaviour you like. Reward the behaviour with lots of attention, praise, cuddles and favourite activities. Try to avoid giving sweet treats as a reward.
* **Look for times when your child behaves the way you want.** Then tell your child why you are pleased and what you liked about their behaviour.
* **Show your enthusiasm.** When you give praise smile and make eye contact. Praise given across a room or running out of the door won’t have the same impact.
* **Make it clear to your child what you are praising.** Be very specific about what you are praising your child for. It will show you were paying attention and that you really mean it. Instead of just saying “Well done” say “I loved the way you shared your doll with your sister.” Praise is not as powerful if you don’t make it clear what you are praising your child for.
* **Link good behaviour with a reward such as an enjoyable activity or treat.** “Well done for putting your toys away in the box– now we can read a book together”. The rewards can be given spontaneously when you see a good behaviour. Or you can plan to give them when you see a behaviour you are trying to encourage. You may like to use a reward chart to do this.
* **Bribes and rewards are not the same thing.** Parents sometimes use bribes to encourage their child to do something, for example offering treats in exchange for behaving appropriately. However a reward is given after the good behaviour, which is more likely to encourage your child to do it again.

### Tips for praising

* Don’t wait for your child to do something perfectly to praise them. Praise your child for trying as well. If you praise effort, it teaches your child to keep learning and keep trying.
* Praise works best when you give it as soon as the behaviour has happened.
* Let your child hear you saying good things about them.
* Surprise your child with a reward for good behaviour. For example, ‘Thanks for picking up your toys – let’s go to the park to celebrate’.
* Try to give your child 6 times more praise than criticism.

# Make time for love and affection (suitable from birth)

<https://gov.wales/parenting-give-it-time/guidance-and-advice/parenting-tips/tips-for-guiding-childrens-behaviour/make-time-for-love-and-affection>

**It is important to give your child love and affection.**

Love and affection are essential to a child’s healthy brain development. A child’s feelings about themselves, how confident they are and how well they cope with stress, are all affected by the way their parents respond to them.

If you have a warm, loving and affectionate relationship with your child it will help them feel safe and secure. This sense of security is known as bonding or attachment. When children feel secure they are more likely to be happy and confident, and be able to handle conflicts and anger. If your child feels secure they are more likely to be curious and start exploring, which will help them develop well.

### Make time for cuddles and cwtches

Giving your baby or child lots of love and attention will help you become close. Making time to give them lots of cuddles every day will:

* make them feel calm and safe
* help them relax
* make them feel more secure and confident
* help them manage upsets and problems as they grow up
* strengthen their relationship with you.

Lots of physical contact like cuddles, being carried, stroking, holding hands and tickles all help your baby or child release natural chemicals in their body. This makes them feel good – and the chemicals also help their brain grow. This won’t spoil them.

### Make time to play

Playing together is an important way of showing your baby or child that you care for them and love them. You are giving them attention and making them feel special. Playing together doesn’t have to cost much. Your time and attention is more important than expensive toys.

### Make the most of everyday activities

Daily activities like bath time, nappy changing, mealtimes and dressing are opportunities to connect with your child in a meaningful way. You could give your child cuddles, cwtches and tickles during nappy changes or bath time. On your way to the shops or school you could take a few minutes to point out something that might interest them. These interactions with your child don’t have to take up much time but they can make a real difference.

### Special Time

It can be really helpful to set aside some time to have some special time with your child. Ask your child what they would like to do and then join in with them. This could be playing a game, a visit to the park or reading together. By spending special time together your child will learn that you value their company. They will learn that their interests are important and this will help them to be more confident.

**Let your child know that you still love them, even when you don’t like what they do.**

Make sure your child knows it’s the behaviour – not them – you don’t like. Rather than saying “You are a naughty boy for hitting me”. It is better to say “I don’t like it when you hit me. It hurts and makes me sad”.

### It’s OK to ask for help

You’re the most important part of your child’s life. If you’re having difficulty coping or you are worried about your relationship with your child, ask for help. Getting help can make a big difference to both of you.

The Family Information Service will have details of activities and groups in your area.  You can call them on 0300 123 7777. The [**Family Point website**](https://familypoint.cymru/) (External link) also has information on services and activities in your area.

[**Family Lives**](http://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/) (External link) offers a confidential and free (from landlines and most mobiles) helpline (previously known as Parentline). You can call on 0808 800 2222 for information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life. The (English language) helpline is open 9am – 9pm, Monday to Friday and 10am – 3pm Saturday and Sunday.