

Teaching Babies and Toddlers

Many parents think babies and toddlers are too young to learn the behaviors expected of them. Unfortunately, if you don't discourage negative behaviors, they learn that those behaviors are acceptable. Teaching the behaviors you want to see requires repetition and patience, but sets them up for a lifetime of success. A child who knows what's expected of them feels secure, exhibits self-control, and has the ability to make good choices.



Infants and toddlers need to explore to learn, but their level of understanding and memory are poor. At this age, discipline means removing things you don't want the child to touch. When he or she gets a hold of something that's off-limits, say "No" calmly. Replace the item with something that she can play with, or distract her with a different activity.

Give your child plenty of positive attention. Your child will repeat behavior that gets your attention, so make a point to praise good behavior. Be specific. Say "I like how you're taking turns," instead of "You're being such a good boy."

Never spank, hit or shake your child. Physical punishment teaches your child that it's okay to hit when angry. It also teaches your child to fear you – not respect you. If you or your child is angry, consider moving to a safe place to settle down.

For FREE parenting support, call the Health Department of Northwest Michigan at 1-800-432-4121 or visit www.nwhealth.org