

12 Steps to Boundaries with Younger Children

1. Consider your child's perspective before setting a boundary. Sometimes your child is deeply immersed in his or her own agenda.
2. Effective boundaries help create a harmonious space between you and your child. They work for everyone's well-being. They will help build your child's self-esteem.
3. Your "no" means "no." Once you set a boundary, don't change your mind.
4. "No" does not mean "maybe." And "no" should not tell your child I'll just whine, cajole or have a tantrum to get my way.
5. Be consistent. It's confusing for children if we treat their behavior as cute and funny one day and then scold them for the same behavior the next.
6. Be aware of your body language and tone of voice. Children are very tuned in to your tone of voice, your facial expressions and your body language. Children see anger as rejection, so stay calm.
7. Remember that it's not just what we say, it's also how we say it. Avoid the words "good" and "bad." Use the words "appropriate" or "inappropriate." Put boundaries on their behavior, but allow them to feel whatever they feel.
8. Children, like all of us, are less cooperative when they're not feeling okay. Before you jump in with a strong-arm boundary, ask

yourself, “Is my child hungry, angry, anxious, lonely, or tired?” Dealing with these issues can often result in the challenging behavior melting away.

9. Support your child when a task may seem overwhelming. We sometimes think children learn to do chores by our insistence. But haven't you ever been in a situation where tidying a room, or sorting a cupboard, seems so daunting you find every reason not to do the job? Or you start to do it and then give up? Children are like adults in this way.
10. Our children learn better how to handle tasks if we support them, for example “Let's tidy your room together.”
11. While an allowance for chores is acceptable, do not bribe your children to give you a break from parenting. An allowance is for chores, it is not a way to show your children they are loved and accepted. Positive reinforcement includes compliments and time alone with a parent.
12. Set boundaries that are age-appropriate. Young children's brains are still under construction. This means that they don't see things as we do. They don't always fully comprehend spoken instructions. They are more impulsive. If there are rules for everything, children will resist. Have as few boundaries as possible, but stick to them.