

# Positive Behavior Strategies:

## Setting Limits



*Children need limits and boundaries to feel safe and cared for. Setting limits with children helps them learn what is acceptable and what is not, and helps them develop self-control. Setting and enforcing limits and rules can be tricky. Here are some helpful hints for establishing limits with your child.*

- **Keep instructions SIMPLE and SPECIFIC.** Use a statement - not a question.
  - Try providing specific actions you would like your child to complete, i.e. “put the blocks into the basket.”
- **Ask twice and then help.** After asking your child to do something, wait a short period and ask again. Wait one more time and then help them complete the action.
  - Try not to provide the child with too much time between giving the command and when they complete the command. Sometimes the time you give them may actually be a REWARD for them.
- **Avoid negotiating** with your child about what you are asking them to do.
  - If it is not an option, don't make it one. Use statements, such as “Time to go inside” and give warnings if needed, i.e. “In two minutes we will go inside”. If needed give a choice to help the child comply, such as “You can put on your shoes first or your coat first.”
- **Limit the number of rules**
  - Focus on only 3 to 5 major rules that the child will be able to understand and successfully apply. Emphasize the action you want rather than the action you don't want! Young children need boundaries and guidelines that are age appropriate, reasonable, flexible, and understandable.
- **Consistent consequences** and follow through of all expectations
  - Explain, Rehearse, and Reinforce! When you set a limit, no matter what the limit is, it's important to be consistent when reinforcing the limit. If you tell your child they have a time limit to finish what they're doing, be sure to stop what you're doing and enforce the time limit when the time comes. Following through is as important as setting the limit in the first place. By being consistent with your limits, your child learns they can trust you to do what you say.