

## Time-out Dos and Don'ts

- Do make 'time-in' as rich as possible, include lots of affection, descriptive praise, engaging activities and parental attention. This is a vital part of the time-out strategy. Descriptive praise should be enthusiastic and focus on the behaviours you would like the child to do more of (e.g., *staying calm, being gentle, keeping hands and feet to self, doing as asked straight away*).
- Do use time-out for inappropriate behaviours that the child has some control over, such as aggression, biting, kicking or screaming.
- Do stay calm when using time-out.
- Do return the child to time-in as soon as possible after time-out is over.
- Do ask the child to sit quietly in time-out for a short time while they calm down and regulate their emotions. Time-out ends after they have been quiet for the set period of time in time-out.
- Do keep time-out to a short period of time. Requiring the child to be quiet for two minutes in time-out is usually enough.
- Do use time-out on a chair or a step in the same room or nearby. Return the child to time-out if they leave before their period of quiet is over.
- Do not give any attention to the child whilst they are in time-out and ensure that there is nothing for them to play with.
- Do keep a diary to record how often you use time-out. Your need to use time-out should decrease over time.
- Do seek further assistance if you find time-out is not effective or if you have questions. Consult a child and family practitioner or enroll in the free online parenting program ParentWorks: [www.parentworks.org.au](http://www.parentworks.org.au)
- Do tell the child the reason why they are going to time-out (e.g., *you hit your brother, you have not done as I have asked*) and remind the child of the rules of time-out (sit and be quiet for two minutes) every time you use it
- Do have a playful rehearsal of time-out before you start using it. Roleplay by putting a toy or another caregiver in time-out so the child knows what to expect. Let the child know what behaviours will earn time-out

- Do repeat the instruction to the child after time-out is over, if they went to time-out for noncompliance. Further noncompliance will earn an additional time-out
- Do not allow the child to decide when they are ready to exit time-out, time-out works best when controlled by the parent
- Do not use time-out for behaviours that represent an inability to do something, such as making a mistake or a fear of doing something, or a lack of understanding.
- Do not criticise the child or use rejecting language that threatens the child's attachment

**SOURCE:** Professor Mark Dadds, Child Behaviour Research Clinic, University of Sydney