

**Giving Directions:**

- Simple, clear directions
- Praise following directions
- Use Countdown
- Be a cheer leader and comment on progress (talk them through with praise)
- Use Grandma's Rule (when you get dressed, then we'll read a book)
- Teach children how to do something rather than punishing them for not doing things.
- Practice doing a task five times if they don't follow directions.
- Let children do as many things by themselves as possible.
- Because they want to have control over themselves at 2,3, 4 & 5 in a very big way, you must offer choices. The more control she has, the less likely she'll reject taking directions
- Use manual guidance and reward movement. "thank you for getting dressed"
- Offer incentives for speed "when we play beat the clock, you can play for an extra ten minutes."

**Getting Out of the House:**

- Allow lead-time for dawdlers to get out of the house. If you don't allow enough time, they will pick up on your stress.
- Routine and schedule with warnings of change.
- Talk about what is ahead..."What do you think Grandma will say when we get to her house?"
- Use natural consequences when not hurtful (instead of arguing about them wearing a coat, just carry it and let them get cold and ask for it)
- Use positive logical consequences – "If we can get out in time today, we can have some extra time at the park."

**Safety:**

- Restrict limits if child goes beyond area, "I'm sorry you went on the street, now you must play in the house."
- Reward the opposite "You stayed on the swing set without going to the neighbour's, now you can swing for three more minutes."

**Self-help:**

- Buy clothing that your child can manage.
- Get easy pour containers for self-help.
- Choices
- Mark drawers and have see through plastic bins
- Have five minute tidy times
- Get rid of dangers and don't overuse "No"

**Aggressive Behaviour:**

- Watch play closely and supervise
- Avoid role modeling aggressive behaviour
- Point out biting and hitting when you see someone else do it.
- Tell them what to do instead
- Praise kids getting along
- Give a three part reprimand – A command to stop “Stop hitting!” an alternative action and naming a feeling “When you’re angry, leave the group.” and a reason for stopping “Hitting hurts people.”
- Say, “we bite apples not people”
- Don’t hang onto the incident – forget it.

**Interrupting:**

- Limit the length of conversations
- Practice play telephone (watch him talk without interrupting)
- Have special toys available for times that you are on the phone (toys that aren’t messy and don’t need supervision)
- Offer praise
- Involve your child in conversations that you are having with other people
- Use a timer to limit your conversations
- Time out if interruption continue but be reasonable with your expectations

**During a difficult stage you must;**

- 1) minimize your rules;
- 2) be consistent with the rules you have;
- 3) ignore your child’s verbal flak;
- 4) be positive;
- 5) spend 1:1 time with your child;
- 6) “Roll with the punches”!
- 7) Try to meet some of your needs

**Dealing With Tantrums:**

- Model ways to handle anger and frustration.
- Catch your child being calm and express appreciation.
- Join in their play occasionally.
- Catch the pot bubbling before the lid goes off.
- Sometimes ignoring tantrums helps.

## Tips and Tools for Parenting Pre-Schoolers

- If it is about not getting something, stand your ground and know they need to learn they can't always have their own way.
- Forget the tantrum when it is over and don't hold it against them.

### **Whining:**

- Pay attention to your child's needs
- Teach your child what whining is and isn't
- Ignore the whining by turning your back
- Give the child acceptance of the emotions
- Give them a place where they can whine
- Reward your child with positive praise when they speak without whining
- Don't punish the child for whining
- Avoid getting angry
- Remember this phase will pass
- Don't reward the whining behaviour by giving in

### **Name Calling:**

- Try not to make a big deal out of toilet talk (pee pee poo poo)
- If they are using offensive words ask them to say something else instead
- Teach your child about legal and illegal words
- Avoid name calling or even labels like "You devil" yourself
- Use time out consistently for a short period of time (two weeks)
- Ignore some name calling
- Give them other words to express themselves
- Avoid severe punishment
- Reflect their feelings ("You sound angry!")

### **Bedtime:**

- Routine – get your child to tell you what is next and keep it the same
- Don't change the routine even if you are out of time
- Talk in a whisper only after story time.
- Play Beat The clock an hour before bed time if he gets his jammies on etc in 20 minutes he'll have 40 minutes of play
- Offer rewards such as reading and extra story if he gets into bed nicely.
- Discuss bedtime rules at a non-bedtime (like getting out of bed).

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- Celebrate staying in bed in the morning by going to the park, having a special breakfast, playtime with you or anything enjoyable to your child.
- Stand firm with your rules – a shut door for ten minutes this depends on your child if the child gets out of bed.
- Don't go back on rituals or rules yourself
- Time the amount of fussing.
- Keep your cool
- Don't talk to your child from a distance at night – it teaches her to yell too.

### *Sibling Rivalry*

When parents are in a battle for control, another type of triangle is frequently seen. One parent interferes with the other as the first is interacting with the children. John interrupts with "Mary, you're being too hard on him," as Mary imposes a consequence on her son. Mary interrupts with "John, he should be asleep by now," as John reads his son a lengthy story. Then John and Mary wonder why their children don't accept their discipline.

Children naturally have conflict with one another, and they need help working it out. But we need to be careful about the role we play. Kids develop their identities as "good" or "bad" within the family; a child often initiates a fight in order to get a parent to judge and select them as the "good" child. Often the younger or apparently weaker child is the instigator, but the parent only comes in after the instigation, when the older child is striking back. Therefore it's important for the parent not to act as the judge, and not to protect the apparently weaker child, except for stopping any physical violence. If you take sides and play referee, the problems of sibling conflict increase dramatically. Retire your whistle and your striped shirt! It doesn't do any good and it will keep you in the ring for the rest of your life.

Sibling conflict can often increase when:

- There is conflict between mom and dad.
- One of the children is going through a transition stage
- One of the children is experiencing stress at school with peers.
- When the older child is forced to baby-sit the younger child too much.
- When privacy or possession boundaries are not enforced by the parents.

**When you were a child, how did your parents handle sibling rivalry? How would you like them to have handled it?**

**Do you play judge in your children's sibling conflicts?**

It is important to allow your children to work things out on their own, only calling upon you if they really can't do it. The following are guidelines for parents :

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1. Don't automatically come running when someone screams or hits. After you'd taught the children some conflict resolution skills, let them know they're on their own and you're going to walk away. They have to learn how to prevent it getting to that point.
2. Never become the judge of who's right and who's wrong in a fight, or who started it. If you do, the kids will create more fights just for the opportunity to have you choose between them, hoping they will get to be your favourite.
3. Take time to listen to your children's feelings. You can accept their feelings without agreeing or taking sides with them. "I hate having a brother, we should get rid of him. Accepting feelings sounds like: "You feel really frustrated when he goes into your room!" rather than, "Yes, I'm going to tell him to stop doing that! He is driving me crazy too!"
4. Help them identify their needs (privacy, inclusion, safety...) so that they can brainstorm on effective strategies to get those needs met.
5. When you bring the kids together to resolve conflict make sure you are feeling calm and able to act as a coach rather than a referee. If you are uptight and stressed – wait until your feelings calm down.
6. Conflict resolution means identifying the issue, hearing each other's feelings and needs and brainstorming on solutions. The brainstorming doesn't happen as smoothly if you avoid acknowledging feelings.
7. If a fight gets violent or you can't stand the noise, just separate the kids and send them to their rooms or to different places to cool down, or in warm weather tell them they have to fight outside particular conflict. Parents do have a right to some peace and quiet!
8. Make sure that you have a secure connection with each one of your children. Taking time with them apart from the family to go on dates and spend time together nurtures the need to belong and be understood. Without that sense of connection, children will fight to protect their position with you that much harder.

### **Are you able to stop butting in and taking sides?**

**Observe what's really going on.** Observe a few fights from start to finish without intervening. Make sure you see as well as hear, because nonverbal behaviours such as kicking or making faces also contribute to fights. When you observe, put yourself in each child's shoes.

### **What might be going on in the younger child?**

### **What might be going on in the older child?**

### **Does the one who gets hurt instigate the fights?**

**Establish boundaries** around family members' space, possessions, and time. Each child's bedroom (or half bedroom) should be his or her own private space, where no one else can enter without permission, and where that child can go

whenever he or she needs "time out" from conflict with anyone else. Probably the one who starts the fights won't like it, but that's tough. Each child's possessions also should be clearly his or her own, and not available to anyone else without the child granting permission. There should be clear guidelines about sharing common toys or activities (e.g. TV, video games, Lego) so that a child knows how when or how long he or she may use these before having to turn it over to another family member.

**Do you have clear guidelines about rooms and possessions?**

**If not, what do you need to change?**

**Anticipate** difficult situations. Invite friends over to play with the little one so he won't be bored, or put videos on for him. Ask the older one to do homework in his room. Intervene early if you see or hear the beginning stages of a fight to prevent it. For example, you can distract the child who's bored and give him something to do.

**Are there certain situations in which your children always fight?**

**What can you do to prevent these fights?**

### ***General Parenting Don'ts:***

Avoid overusing the word "No"

Don't ask a question that invites a lie – "Did you hit the cat?" instead say, "I see you hit that cat. That's not okay."

Don't laugh at your children when they are frustrated or are trying to say "no" to you

Don't reason or explain during tantrums or emotional times

Don't throw your own tantrum

Don't bring up past behaviours that were difficult

Don't tempt your child with things.

Don't force apologies (it teaches them to lie)

Don't hold a grudge

Don't take things personally

Don't give in to whining or demands

Don't punish your child for having negative feelings

Don't get angry – it perpetuates bad behaviour

Don't use severe punishment

Don't expect too much from your child

Don't label your child "You are a brat!"

Don't make cleanup an awful experience

Don't touch your child in anger

Don't isolate yourself

## Tips and Tools for Parenting Pre-Schoolers