




# Temper Tantrums

A little guide to help you handle  
your child's temper tantrums



# What are temper tantrums?

Temper tantrums are a natural process of your child's development.

A temper tantrum could involve children:

- Throwing themselves on the floor
- Kicking and hitting people
- Refusing to do something they are asked to do
- Biting themselves or others
- Screaming, shouting, crying or swearing
- Destroying an object or toy

Children who have temper tantrums usually have them with their parents or carers, but every child is different. The major cause of toddler tantrums is conflict with parents, for example over dressing or eating.

Most tantrums will happen in the home but some children will have them in the shops or outside in the street. This can be very distressing for parents.

**What may seem like over the top or just plain naughty behaviour is perfectly normal. Try not to get stressed about it – it won't help!**

## Prevention

There are some tactics that you can employ to ward off trouble.

## At Home

'Toddler-proof' your home so you don't have to keep taking things from your child or saying 'No!' If you put away things you don't want broken or that a child can be hurt by, you won't have to chase after your child and shout at them all day.

## Out Shopping

When you have time why not keep your toddler occupied by letting them help? You could let them choose some of the items you want to buy, such as which biscuits, what colour toilet roll or what fruit to pick. Boredom can cause frustration!

## Visiting/Car journeys

Always have a small goody bag for emergencies. If you have some books, toys, colouring pencils and food to chew on, you will always have something to distract your toddler with when they get bored.

## Be consistent

If your child knows your limits, they are less likely to resort to a tantrum to get what they want. If you have said 'No' to your child, don't then change your mind and give them what they want. It is important to be consistent and follow through. Children soon learn that idle threats can be ignored!



## What can I do?

But what about when you have tried everything and your child is still determined to throw a wobbly?

## Count to ten

If your toddler loses it, the worst thing that you can do is lose it too. Shouting or lashing out will only make the situation worse, and you will often regret what you do if you act in haste. Try to stay calm and count to ten. If you are outside, remember that the people around you probably don't know you and may never see you again, so don't think about your embarrassment - deal with your child.

## Take a step back

Remember that toddlers are learning all the time, and don't expect them to be reasonable in the adult sense – they are not adults!

## Listen and explain

When your child is naughty don't just shout at them and expect them to respond. Bend down to their level, look into their eyes, and explain to them that what they are doing is wrong and why in a calm but firm way.

## Set a good example

Toddlers learn by copying what they see, so the more you shout, or say 'No' or lose your cool, the more likely it is that they will do the same. Hard as it is, it really does pay off to try and stay calm and positive.

## Ignore mild misbehaviour

Choose what is important to you and let the little things go. If you shout all the time your child will begin to ignore you, so save your loud voice for when you have no choice or when your toddler's safety is at risk.



## Encourage them

Give lots of praise for the positive behaviour you want to encourage and try to ignore the bad behaviour when it is safe to do so.

## Positive Discipline

Smacking does nothing to teach a child about how you want them to behave. Try these tips instead:

- Have clear simple rules and limits
- Set a good example
- Praise good behaviour and reward your child with hugs and kisses
- Ignore bad behaviour you don't want repeated
- Don't criticise your child, just their behaviour
- Allow your child some control by making choices or joint decisions
- If a punishment is necessary, try 'time out' or removal of privileges, which work better than smacking.

## Aggression

If you feel your child is aggressive, try to channel their energy into a safe outlet.

## Biting

Biting is very common in children. Most will grow out of it in a short space of time. It can be particularly stressful and upsetting for a parent to find out that their child is biting.

If your child bites:

- Tell your child that biting is wrong
- Explain that biting can hurt
- Do NOT bite your child back to teach them a lesson or bite your child when having rough and tumble play.

## Saying Sorry

Nobody is perfect. If you deal badly with a situation, giving yourself a hard time and feeling guilty about it will not make anything better. Say sorry to your child, make up and move on.

## Look After Yourself

If you are finding it difficult to cope with your child's temper tantrums, speak to your family, friends, health visitor or someone else who can help you.

If you would prefer not to share your worries with someone you know, call **ParentLine Scotland (0808 800 2222)** for free support and advice. Remember not to blame your child for how you are feeling - temper tantrums are a stage of development that every child will go through.

# So remember...

Temper tantrums are a natural process of development. Every child will display a temper tantrum at some point.

Always try to remember that your child is learning all the time. If you use lots of encouragement and praise you are helping your child develop self-confidence and self-esteem.

Try to recognise good behaviour and always praise them when they behave well. Deal with 'bad' behaviour in a positive but firm manner. Children need to have clear boundaries for their own safety and sense of security.

Remember, you are the adult and the parent. Take control of the situation in a positive manner and most importantly, enjoy your child.





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We know talking helps. But what if there's no one to talk to? Or if you prefer not to share concerns with family or friends? That's when ParentLine Scotland can help. We can offer you support and information when you need it.

**If you want to talk we want to listen.**

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