

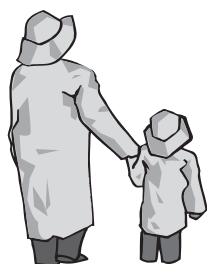


*Parenting is hard work.* Learning what your child is able to do and how you can help meet your child's needs is important. Although every child and situation is different, the tips below have helped many families. We hope they help you and your child during these early years.



**KEEP A SCHEDULE** Young children need a regular schedule. They behave better when they know what to expect. Try to have them eat, nap and play at the same times each day. When planning their daily schedule, include active time and quiet time, time playing together and time for children to play by themselves.

**SET A GOOD EXAMPLE** Young children love to copy adults. If you want children to be nice to each other or have good eating habits, show them how to do it. Tell your child why you do things the way you do. Children may not understand everything you say, but they will begin to understand that you have reasons for doing things a certain way.



**ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD** Encouraging words help your child build confidence. The key to encouraging your child is to be a coach more than a cheerleader. A cheerleader says: "What a great job!" or "What a beautiful picture!" A coach uses specific praise. For example, when your child sets the table, you might say, "You did such a good job setting the table! You put the spoons and forks in the right place and remembered the napkins!" When you look at a child's painting, you might say, "This painting just glows with color. You used blue, green, red, yellow and orange. Tell me how you did this!" Specific praise means a lot more to a child than a brief "You are great."

**Additional tips:**

- Tell your child what they can DO instead of telling them DON'T

**Instead of:**

- Don't leave your toy there
- Don't touch anything
- Don't kick her

**Try:**

- Take your toy back to your room
- We are just looking at these things
- Kicking hurts, use your words to tell her you are upset

- Provide children with simple explanations for your rules or limits and offer alternatives
  - It is 8:00 and time for bed; you may play with the markers tomorrow.
  - You may not have popcorn now because it is dinner time, you may have some Jell-O for dessert after you are finished with your dinner.
- Parents should work together so that children get a set of consistent limits. Whether parents are living together or apart, having the same rules is important in developing a safe environment for children.
- Parents should give their children choices to promote independence, for example:
  - Ask your children if they would like a banana or applesauce for their snack. Would they like to play with blocks or books?
  - Avoid asking if they are ready to go to bed, or if they would like to put on their jacket before going outside because it is cold. These activities are not optional.

*When your children grow up,* they will not remember the perfectly clean house or elaborate meals, but the time spent together sharing love and laughter.

*You can call Florida's Parent HelpLine*  
at 1-800-FLA-LOVE for tips on connecting with  
your child or any other parenting matter.