

Behaviour in the Early Years: Good Practice in Seven Simple Steps

Step 1: Be calm, clear and consistent

- React to challenging behaviour in a cool, deliberate manner. Use the 'bored policeman' style
- Make sure everyone knows the rules

Step 2: Use praise and rewards

- Use the child's name and 'catch her/him being good'
- Rewards must be immediate but do not have to be big

Step 3: Provide good models

- Point out a child who is doing well (not always the same one!)
- Use play to model good behaviour e.g. home corner/ puppets

Step 4: Guide the child (break tasks into small steps if necessary)

- Giving a child warning of an activity change can help e.g. using a 5 minute sand timer to lead up to tidy up time

Step 5: Ignore bad behaviour (unless it is aggressive or destructive)

- Remember that this can make the behaviour worse before it gets better – give it time!
- Use positive statements e.g. 'lets walk in nursery' rather than negative ones e.g. 'don't run!'

Step 6: Remove from the scene ('time out')

- Time out should be for a short period (e.g. 2-3 minutes max) and should not be humiliating or scary for the child
- Someone should sit with the child but not give them any attention

Step 7: Use sanctions (as a last resort)

- Like rewards these need to be immediate and the child needs to know why it is happening
- Remember that, generally, rewards are much more effective than sanctions