



Welcome Words for your 2 1/2 - 3 Year Old

LIMITS YOU CAN LIVE WITH

- Hard as it is to believe when your child has a tantrum after being limited to "just one popsicle," children crave limits. While a parent's job is to set and enforce limits, your child's job is to test them. When you are firm and predictable, your child feels safer and more secure.
- Remember, you're the grown up. Though you may feel as frustrated as your child, you have experience and resources that he doesn't. If you yell, don't feel guilty, but do apologize later: "I'm sorry I yelled, but I was really angry." Remind him that you love him and give him a hug.
- When setting limits, use eye contact, a firm tone, and positive language. Instead of saying, "Don't play with your milk," tell him, "Milk stays in the cup."
- Take action. If you've given a warning: "If you put your hand in your milk again, I'll take the cup away," follow through promptly. Don't worry that he didn't drink his milk.
- If you can't remove the source of misbehavior -- for instance, your child is climbing on a table -- remove him, and find a distraction.
- Time-out is one way of removing your child from the source of conflict or misbehavior. Some parents reserve it for violent or dangerous behaviors such as hitting; others find it helps when other strategies have failed.
- Limit time-out to a minute for each year of age and choose a neutral place, such as a chair or his room: "Go to the time-out chair for three minutes for throwing blocks." Set a timer he can see (or hear). When the timer goes off, let him know that "Time-out's over," and move on to a new activity.
- Natural consequences. If your child smashes his cookies, don't automatically replace them with new cookies. Unless there's an accident, let him suffer the consequences of crumbling his cookies. Too much sympathy can be his worst enemy.
- Catch good behavior. If you find yourself frequently correcting your child, take a few minutes to think about what he's doing right. Then, as soon as you see something you can praise, do so. Follow up with a quick hug. You'll be surprised at how quickly this brings positive results.

At 3 years,

- I want to be included.
- I like praise and want to please.
- I ask many questions.
- I am sensitive and cry easily.
- I have lots of energy and need free, active play.
- I play well with others for short periods, but may be bossy.
- I am learning to wait my turn.
- I may dawdle if rushed.

Give me

- blunt scissors and paper.
- a costume box with dress-up clothes and jewelry.
- play dishes and cooking utensils.
- hand puppets.
- markers or large crayons and large-size paper.
- large beads for stringing.
- beanbags and balls.
- puzzles with large pieces.
- books

Suggested Reading

First Feelings and The Essential Partnership by Stanley I. Green-span, M.D. & Nancy Thorndike Greenspan

Discipline Without Shouting or Spanking by Jerry Wyckoff, PhD.

I'm Two Years Old by Jeri Wolfe

Enjoying Your 3 Year Old



At 2 1/2, toddlers are usually a bundle of contradictions. The same child who insists he can pour his own glass of milk from a heavy container protests minutes later that he needs help to take off his shoes. Take heart. Your 3-year-old is more likely to try to please you and to enjoy being with you. Dr. Arnold Gesell describes this as a "coming of age, a time at which the many strands of previous development converge, and a new self comes into focus."

Part of a 3-year-old's pleasure seems to come from his improved command over his own body: he walks and runs with ease and can undress and (maybe) help dress himself. Language is becoming a source of pleasure: he enjoys new words, the bigger and sillier sounding the better. He can now enjoy playing with a friend, at least for a short time, and may actually talk to other children as much as to his teacher or caregiver. Every child, of course, develops at his own pace, but you can look forward to a period of relative calm and cooperation around this time. When you begin to hear "Yes," more than "No!," you'll realize you've reached this developmental comfort zone.

Fantasy and Fun



"Knock, knock."
"Who's there?"
"Boo."
"Boo who?"

Your 3-year-old is likely to become a very receptive audience to simple jokes, so make the most of it. If your repertoire of preschool humor is limited, find a children's joke book at the library. Soon your child will be telling you his own favorites.

As his imagination grows, he may develop an imaginary friend. You might be asked not to sit in that chair because "you'll sit on him," or asked to serve an extra cookie for this unseen guest. Play along, treating this "visitor" with respect. Teasing your child may cause him to go deeper into his fantasy world than you'd like.

Avoid the temptation to use your child's friend to win cooperation, but don't let him become a scapegoat. If "Timmy" knocked down the blocks, tell your child he must help "Timmy" put them away.

POTTY PATIENCE

*If your child shows all the signs of readiness, understands what is expected, and still refuses to use the potty, here are some suggestions adapted from *What to Expect: The Toddler Years* (Workman, 1994):*

Let go. Let him take responsibility by saying, "It's your BM and your urine and you can make them on the potty when you want to. If there's anything I can do to help you, just ask me."

Offer choices. Would he like diapers or training pants? Potty or big toilet? Keep your opinions to yourself.

Stop reminding. Anything you say is bound to be held against you – and to delay things even more.

Don't talk about it. Make this a non-issue for a while. Don't even discuss it when he's around.

Incentives. Casually offer an incentive, such as stickers on a calendar for each success.

Don't rush night dryness. This may require more physical maturity than your 3-year old is capable of. Diaper him well for the night and give him the time his body needs to mature.

Keeping Sibling Peace

"Children don't need to be treated equally," write authors Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish in their book, *Siblings Without Rivalry*, "they need to be treated uniquely."

The statement above doesn't necessarily mean that you'll never divide another cupcake in half; it does suggest that you focus on each child's needs and wishes. Here are some tips that may help promote the peace at your house.

- Appreciate each child for who he is. Don't compare or judge, either positively or negatively.
- Give each child some time alone with you every day, even if it's only 10 minutes of your undivided attention.
- Give siblings time apart from each other; they need to develop independent friendships.
- Honor possessions. Establish times when an older child can play with toys that are not toddler- or baby-proof; don't force handing down a treasured possession (or article of clothing) to a younger sibling.
- Be realistic. Don't expect an older child to always give in to a younger sibling or to set an example because he "knows better."
- Set firm limits against hurting and name-calling, but encourage your children to express feelings: "No hitting (or name-calling). Use words to tell your brother what made you angry."
- If necessary, separate siblings and suggest safe ways to express anger: "You can draw a picture (or write, if he's old enough) about how you're feeling" or "You may hit a pillow (or a drum), but not your sister."
- Sibling preparation classes, which offer kids an introduction to life with a baby in the house, can be helpful. One study showed parents reported less rivalry after such a class.
- Respect feelings. If your child says he wants to send the baby back, don't contradict him with, "No you don't. You love her." Instead, say, "It's all right to be angry that the new baby cries so much. It will help if we talk about it."