

## 1. Notice the Behaviour You Want More Of

Children often receive the most attention when they are doing something wrong. Instead, try to notice and comment on the behaviour you would like to see more often.

When children feel seen for positive behaviour, they are more likely to repeat it.

Instead of focusing mainly on:

- “Stop that.”
- “Why are you doing that?”
- “You never listen.”

Try:

- “I noticed how kind you were.”
- “Thank you for helping.”
- “You handled that really well.”
- “I love how you kept trying.”

Attention is powerful. What we notice often grows.

## 2. Help Children Keep Behaving Well

Positive feedback helps children repeat good behaviour.

Encouragement, praise, connection, and attention all strengthen positive choices.

This does not mean constant rewards or overpraising. It means helping children feel:

- seen
- valued
- capable
- encouraged

Whenever possible:

- give more attention to positive behaviour
- give less energy to minor inappropriate behaviour
- redirect calmly rather than escalating

Children thrive when good behaviour feels rewarding.

## 3. Have Clear and Positive Rules

Rules work best when they tell children what they *can* do rather than only what they cannot do.

Instead of:

- “No yelling.”
- “Don’t run inside.”

Try:

- “Use calm voices.”
- “Walking feet inside.”

Children need:

- clear expectations
- consistent reminders
- predictable boundaries

House rules should be:

- simple
- known
- repeated calmly

- realistic for the child's age

Positive rules help children understand success rather than only failure.

## 4. Make Sure Consequences Are Known Ahead of Time

Children feel safer when boundaries are predictable.

Consequences work best when:

- they are known beforehand
- they are calm and consistent
- they logically fit the behaviour

For example:

- throwing a toy may mean losing access to that toy for a period of time
- not completing homework may mean less screen time until it is done

Avoid consequences that are:

- extreme
- unrelated
- emotionally reactive
- shame-based

The goal is learning, not punishment.

Whenever appropriate, involve children in creating rules and consequences. This helps build responsibility and cooperation.

## 5. Allow Children to Make Choices

Children learn responsibility by making choices and experiencing outcomes.

When children know:

- the rules
- the expectations
- the consequences

they are able to make informed decisions.

This shifts discipline away from control and toward learning.

For example:

- "You can choose to pack your bag now or after dinner, but it needs to be done before bedtime."
- "You can choose whether you wear the blue jumper or the red one."

Healthy choices help children:

- build independence
- develop problem-solving skills
- feel respected
- learn accountability

## 6. Stay Calm and Avoid Power Struggles

Discipline works best when parents stay regulated.

Children borrow regulation from adults. When adults escalate emotionally, children often escalate too.

Having clear rules and known consequences helps parents:

- stay calm
- avoid arguing

- reduce power struggles
- respond consistently

The aim is not to “win” against the child.

The aim is to guide, teach, and lead.

Calm, confident parenting creates emotional safety.

## 7. Be Careful About Double Consequences

If a child has already experienced consequences at school or elsewhere, pause before adding additional punishment at home.

Sometimes children need:

- support
- connection
- regulation
- understanding

rather than another layer of consequences.

This does not mean ignoring behaviour. It means responding thoughtfully.

Ask:

- What happened?
- What support do they need?
- Have they already experienced a natural consequence?
- Is my child dysregulated, overwhelmed, embarrassed, or ashamed?

Often children learn more through feeling heard and supported than through additional punishment.

## Final Thoughts

Discipline is not about fear, shame, or control.

It is about helping children feel safe, supported, and guided while they learn responsibility, emotional regulation, and healthy behaviour.

Children thrive when they experience:

- clear boundaries
- calm leadership
- encouragement
- connection
- consistency

You do not need to be a perfect parent.

You just need to keep repairing, reconnecting, and guiding your child with love and steadiness.



# Steps to Great Discipline for Children