

# Tips for Parents



Magu plant.  
Rhowch amser iddo.  
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Parenting.  
Give it time.  
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## Take time to think about how you respond to tricky or unwanted behaviour

There are many behaviours that parents can find tricky in the early years. Most of the behaviour you think of as unacceptable is actually normal behaviour for your child's age and stage of development.

Young children often communicate their feelings and needs through their behaviour, whether they realise it or not. This is because they do not yet have the words or understanding to communicate verbally or in other ways.



- **Make time to show love.** Giving your child love and attention will help you become close. Close contact triggers a hormone called oxytocin, which makes you all feel happy. Try to make time to be physically close and give cuddles every day.
- **Spend time together.** Unwanted behaviour can be a child's way of seeking connection. Make sure you give your child plenty of opportunities for connection throughout the day by talking, listening and playing. Together you can build their speech and language skills.
- **Notice the good.** Give your child genuine praise when you see a positive behaviour. This helps your child feel good about themselves and they are more likely to repeat it.
- **Meet the need.** Children use noises, whining, whinging and stamping to gain attention. Rather than react to these behaviours, try to give lots of praise and attention to the behaviours you want to see more of.
- **Try to work out the reason for your child's behaviour.** Think about whether there are times when you see more unwanted behaviours. What triggers this behaviour? What changes could you make to avoid this and break the cycle? The acronym **HALT** is a good starting point to use when doing this with young children – is your child **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely or **T**ired?

- **Develop structure and order to the day.** Establish some routines as this will help your child understand what is expected of them and what is going to happen. When out and about, have some small toys to distract your child with or think of some games to play. Distract your child when they are about to do something you don't like.
- **Stick to clear boundaries.** Children need to learn that there are certain rules that cannot be broken in order to keep them safe. This can be explained to them and an alternative offered. *"We don't have sweets before dinner but you can have an apple or a banana if you're hungry."*
- **Time in.** Sometimes your child may have reached a stage where they can't be distracted from their behaviour and they need to be taken away from the situation to a calm place. They are still learning to calm their emotions and they need your help to do it. Once they are calm they will be in a space to reflect on their behaviour with you.
- **Try to encourage everyone close to your child to deal with unwanted behaviour in the same way.** This consistent approach helps your child feel secure. Your child may get confused if they are allowed to do something one day and then is told off for doing the same thing the next day.
- **Do not smack or physically punish your child.** This is illegal in Wales. Children need to feel safe and secure in their family and their home in order for them to be at their best.

## Where to get advice and support

Universal parenting support and advice is provided by midwives, health visitors, GPs and your local authority. Early help programmes such as Flying Start (if you live in a Flying Start area) and Families First are also available.

Look after yourself. Meeting up with other parents can be great for your wellbeing. Your local **Family Information Service (www.fis.wales)** will be able to tell you what's on in your area.

For positive parenting tips and expert advice, visit: [gov.wales/giveittime](https://gov.wales/giveittime)

