



WHINING

Whining is common in young children and can be very frustrating for parents. Coping with whining is even more difficult if it is your child's usual way of talking. Children who whine a lot need help to learn better ways of speaking. This tip sheet gives some suggestions to help you manage whining and teach your toddler how you would like them to talk to others.

WHAT IS WHINING?

Whining is a drawn out, complaining way of speaking, often in an irritating tone of voice. This is an unacceptable way of making requests or comments.

WHY DO CHILDREN WHINE?

Whining may be a way for children to communicate discomfort, such as when they are hungry, bored, tired, wet, unhappy or unwell.

Young toddlers may whine when they do not have the words to say what they want. They whine less as they learn the names of things they want, how to speak in a pleasant tone of voice, and how to say *Please*, *Thank you* and *May I have*.

Children may whine to get attention. If they ask nicely at first and nobody takes any notice, they may then whine to be noticed.

Some children whine to get their own way. If whining works, it will continue. Children may learn that they are more likely to get what they want if they keep whining. When parents give in to whining, children are accidentally rewarded. The whining may stop at the time, but it is likely to happen next time their child wants something.

Children may whine when they do not get their own way. This sort of whining can occur when parents say *No* or ask their child to do something they do not want to do, or when children become frustrated because things do not go the way they expected.



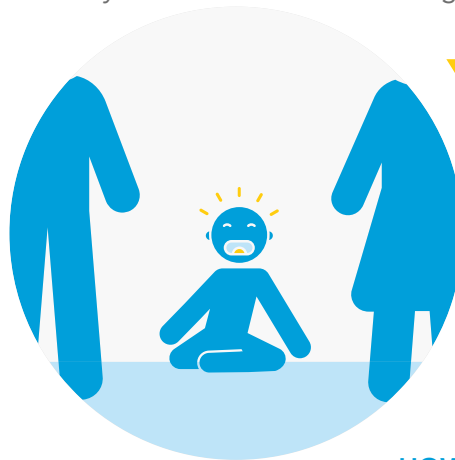
HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILD TO SPEAK NICELY

▼ Set a good example

Show your child how to speak nicely by setting a good example. Try to speak calmly and pleasantly in front of your child at all times. Avoid nagging or raising your voice.

▼ Encourage desirable behavior

When your child speaks nicely and asks for things in a polite way, praise them and give them your attention. It is particularly important to praise children when they speak nicely without being reminded.



HOW TO MANAGE WHINING

▼ Tell your child what to do

When your child approaches you and whines for something, stop what you are doing and bend down to their level. Tell your child to stop whining and to speak nicely — *Jenny stop whining for a cookie. Ask nicely.*

▼ Show your child how to ask nicely

At first, give your child an example of what you would like them to say — *Jenny, say “Mommy, may I have a cookie please?”* Use a pleasant voice and simple words that your child can say. In future, when your child has learned to ask nicely, you can remind them to use the words by saying *Pardon?*

▼ Praise your child for asking nicely

Praise your child if they follow your example and ask nicely — *That was nice asking. Well done.*

▼ Back up your instruction with a logical consequence

If your child still does not ask nicely, provide a logical consequence. The most appropriate consequence is that your child does not get what they asked for — *You haven’t asked nicely. The cookies go away for 10 minutes. Try again then.* Five to 10 minutes of missing out on the activity or privilege is usually long enough. Ignore protests or complaints. Do not debate or argue the point with your child. Simply carry out the consequence.



▼ Return the activity

Once the time is up, if your child has stopped whining, praise them for being quiet and give them a chance to ask nicely for what they want. If your child asks nicely, praise them and decide whether the request is reasonable. If your child does not ask nicely, repeat the logical consequence for a longer period. Ignore any further whining as described over the page. You may need to use logical consequences a number of times before your child learns to use a pleasant voice and ask nicely for what they want.

HOW TO RESPOND TO YOUR CHILD’S REQUEST

▼ Decide whether the request is reasonable

When your child uses a pleasant voice, respond to their request. Do not say *Yes* or *No* until they have asked nicely. Sometimes you will need to say *No* even if your child has asked nicely.

Learning to accept *No* is an important part of growing up. If the request is reasonable, praise your child for asking nicely and give them what they want.

If you need to say *No*, praise your child for asking nicely, then refuse the request in a calm voice. Give your reason — *That was nice asking, Jenny, but dinner is soon so you cannot have a cookie.* Suggest something else your child can do instead — *You could go and finish your game or watch TV until dinner is ready.*



▼ If necessary, use planned ignoring

If your child whines in response to being denied what they want, turn away and pay no attention until your child stops whining. Do not look at or speak to your child. You may need to walk away. When you first try this, be prepared for the whining to get worse before it gets better. If you ignore the whining for a while and then give in, you will teach your child that they need to whine louder and longer to get what they want. Your child must learn that they will not get what they want when they whine. If you have said *No*, stick to your decision. Being consistent will teach your child you mean no when you say *No*.

POINTS TO REMEMBER

At first, your child’s behavior may get worse when you change your response to whining. Some children hit, kick or pinch their parents, others may throw themselves on the floor in a tantrum. See the tip sheets *Hurting Others* and *Tantrums* in this series for more information on how to manage these problem behaviors.



KEY STEPS

- Set a good example by speaking nicely.
- If your child whines for something, tell them to speak nicely.
- Praise your child for speaking nicely.
- Use logical consequences for continued whining.
- Give your child another opportunity to ask nicely.
- Decide if your child's request is reasonable and stick to your decision.
- Ignore whining in response to being told No.
- Be consistent — once you have started ignoring, continue until the whining stops.