

GIVING CHILDREN CHOICES

Adults don't like to be forced to do things and neither do children. Allowing choices now helps a child learn to make better decisions as they grow up.



TIPS FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD MAKE GOOD CHOICES:

At what age should choices begin?

An infant can make choices such as a preference for carrots over potatoes. Young children can choose to have a story read to them or a song sung to them before bed. As children get older, they can be allowed more freedom in their choices.

It is best to set limits

As parents, we can allow young children to begin to pick what they want to wear, but in the beginning we may say limit choices, "Do you want to wear this or that?" Helping them learn to choose the correct clothes for the type of weather is an important skill to learn. (No coats when it's hot outside or sandals when there is snow.) Other limits might be bed time and the type and amount of TV for young children.

Be consistent

If your child's choice was to clean up their toys after dinner instead of before dinner, then make sure that they follow through on that decision. Remember, some choices will be different from what you might have decided. As they prove their dependability, their choices can be more complex.

What to Do if Kids Don't Make Good Choices

- Avoid making demands ("Stop talking!")
- Avoid making threats ("If you don't stop talking you're going to time out!")
- Avoid power struggles (arguing "Yes you did!" "No I didn't!")
- Offer choices (Be sure they are ones you can live with. "Either quiet down or go in the other room.")
- Use logical consequences ("I've repeatedly asked you to quiet down, now you need to put the game away.")