11. **Give natural consequences.** Using natural consequences is a “no-hassle” way to teach discipline. If your child leaves his toys outside and they rust, he’s learning the “hard way” to take care of his belongings.

12. **Give logical consequences.** Logical consequences make sense. Having your child pay for the window he broke playing baseball is an effective way to teach him to be more careful.

Sometimes natural and logical consequences are dangerous and should not be used. For example, it would be dangerous for a child to experience the natural consequence of running into the street. She could be hit by a car!

Remember, consequences are given in a friendly way with a calm voice and by letting the child decide what he will do. Punishment, on the other hand, is given in a hostile way with an angry tone of voice and without giving the child a choice. Which kind of discipline would you rather have?

Misbehavior is a natural part of the child’s learning process. With your guidance, children can grow up to be happy, capable, and responsible people.
Children need to learn self-discipline. Many parents dream of having children who do what they’re supposed to do, when they’re supposed to do it. Unfortunately, children are not born with the knowledge of what is right or wrong. It’s up to parents to teach them.

Teaching discipline does take time and practice. But if you are consistent, loving, and firm, most children will learn to be caring, mannerly, and responsible, even when you’re not around.

First, it’s useful to understand why children misbehave.

Why do children misbehave?

Children could misbehave because:

• They want your attention.
• They are copying another person’s behavior (for example, swearing).
• They are testing limits.
• They want to feel more independent.
• They feel bad about themselves.
• They feel tired, hungry, or sick.
• They don’t know the right thing to do.

Listed below are some steps to help guide your child.

1. Create a safe environment. Lock up dangerous chemicals, cover electrical outlets, and keep breakable objects out of reach. A childproof environment prevents conflict between a curious child and a worried parent.

2. Establish a predictable routine. Routines help children feel safe. Set regular meal and naptimes. Balance active time with quiet time and group time with alone time.

3. Set a good example. Watch your habits, because children will copy them!

4. Be clear and consistent. Set age-appropriate rules. Make sure your child understands the rules and consequences of breaking the rules, and follow through with consequences every time.

5. Give choices. If a child starts to misbehave, interrupt him and give him choices. For example, tell a child who is jumping on the bed that he may either sit on the bed or go into another room. Giving choices prevents power struggles. Give only those choices that you can accept.

6. Praise their efforts. Give specific praise in order to teach and help the child feel good about himself. For example, praise artwork by saying something like, “I like the way you used blue, green, red, and yellow on this painting. Tell me how you did this!”

7. Distract. When a very young child misbehaves, try to move his attention to another activity. For example, if he wants to play with the expensive knick-knacks at a friend’s house, offer him a stuffed animal instead.

8. Redirect. Sometimes the problem is not with a behavior but with the way a child does it. For example, if she is drawing on books, take them away and give her paper instead.

9. Ignore. Ignore misbehavior that is not harmful to the child or others. When a child stops getting attention for the behavior, he will stop.

10. Reward. It’s more effective to reward good behavior than to punish bad behavior. Smiling, hugging, and listening make a child feel special. Money, toys, stickers, etc. are also fine, but be careful. Children can get used to prizes and may not behave without them.