

Quick Tips for Families:
Using Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at Home
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Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a proactive approach for developing a better understanding of why the child uses challenging behavior and teaching the child what to do instead of that challenging behavior. PBIS does not mean changing the child; rather, it means creating an environment that will support the behavior you want to achieve. PBIS isn't just for schools. Parents can use the same ideas and principles at home to improve their children's behaviors. Here are a few tips for using PBIS at home:

Tip One: Making your expectations clear is the first step.

"High rates of inappropriate behavior are associated with lack of clarity about rules, expectations, and consequences" (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

Often we assume the child just knows what we want them to do and understands it the same way we do. For instance, asking a child to clean up his room assumes that his idea of a "clean room" and your idea of a "clean room" are the same. Is this the case?

If there's a possibility that it's not, then our first step in getting the room cleaned to our satisfaction is *not* offering a rewards and bribes to get it clean, but clarifying our expectations of what we want the child to do (i.e., what does a "clean room" actually "look like") and clearly communicating them. A visual checklist is often a helpful way of getting your point across. This is especially important for children with processing and/or attentional difficulties.

Tip Two: Focus more on behaviors you *want* to see (instead of ones you wish would go away) and recognize these successes.

"Establishing effective environments that are naturally reinforcing (4 positive interactions to 1 negative/corrective) has an effect on most negative behavior" (Nelson, Sprague, & Martin, 2004).

On average children comply with the rules much of the time (about 80%). But how often are they *complimented* for their desired behavior or even told that they met your expectation? It's important to remember to recognize successes frequently!

One way to acknowledge when the child follows the rules and meets your expectations is to give very specific, verbal feedback ("Nice job cleaning up—you got all the clothes in the drawers or in your hamper"). Another important part about giving behavioral feedback is "catching him being good" with a high enough frequency. The goal is to aim for a ratio of positive to negative interactions of at least **4 to 1**—this means that for every 1 time you give corrective feedback ("That's not what I meant by pick up your clothes, they need to go into the hamper if they're dirty"), you also try to tell the child about 4 things he did well ("Thanks for clearing your breakfast dishes"). Try to recognize effort and progress by praising *small* successes, too.

Last Tip: Consistency is key and practice makes perfect.

"For every 1 year that a behavior has been in place it takes 1 month of consistent intervention to see a major decrease in the behavior. If that intervention is not implemented consistently, it will take longer to work."

The most important lesson here is about consistency and practice, practice, practice. If you say "no" and give a reason, then don't give in if further begging ensues. This only tells the child that you have a breaking point and to keep trying. If you've said "no" and given a reason, then you should not say "no" again or give *another* reason. It's also very important that both parents/guardians are consistent. And when your child accepts your answer and your reason, be sure to compliment him—recognize this as a success and give him positive feedback on this specific behavior!