

Tips & Tools

For kids that argue



Topics List

[Start Each Day with a Reminder](#)

[Refuse to Engage](#)

[Put it in Writing](#)

[Be Direct](#)

[Chore not Done?](#)

[Set Consequences Ahead of Time](#)

[Cause and Effect for Consequences](#)

[Chores and Arguing](#)

[Ask Properly for a Request](#)

[Ask Properly or it is a “No”](#)

[You Get to Change First](#)

[Set the Limits](#)

[Acknowledge but Go On](#)

[Kids who Listen and Obey](#)

[Don't Give Up!](#)

Feel free to print out your favorite slides/topics as a reminder.



Start Each Day with a Reminder

Start each day off with a reminder (before a problem arises), stating that you want it to be a good day.

Example: “We are working on this goal _____ (i.e. letting parents direct the day) and we have the day planned. We hope you will be cooperative and work hard on your goals today.”



Refuse to Engage

Don't argue! It sounds simple but we know it is not easy to avoid with a child that continues to push for more words.

Be clear and concise and refuse to engage. If something is said that is a good point, etc., don't go into it at that time.

Whenever the child is arguing, it is not a good time to try to switch to a healthy debate or conversation. It's like demanding a hug right after punching the person. Stay with your clear directive, and disengage from the arguments.



Put it in Writing

Start having all arguments be in writing just like all complaints.

“That sounds like a good point, please put that in writing.”



Be Direct

Be direct but not rude. “Your job is to do the dishes, please do that now.”

Don’t ask or end with a question of “Ok?”

Set the timer. “The job needs to be done correctly, the way I have shown you before the timer is off.”

(if chore is not done, see next slide)



Chore not Done?

If not done, don't argue. "Ok. Time is up for that chore." And move on.

The consequence of not getting it done needs to be decided beforehand. "If we can't get dishes done during chore time, then _____." Make it as close as possible to the choice the child made.

For example: "Oh I see you didn't get it all done correctly. Ok. Well time is up and now we are going to family reading time. I guess you will have to stay right here with me while they do that as I have to finish the chore." If you get it done in time together, you can go back into the activity.

Be decisive about what will happen if the chore is not done. Remember, you can't force the chore or activity, but you can make it uncomfortable for her if she chooses unwisely. If she is arguing, then either ignore the arguing, have her put it in writing so you can read it later, or say, "I would do this with you, but not with arguing. So you can continue by yourself and I will be over here."



Set Consequences Ahead of Time

Set the consequences ahead of time, and let them know. “When we played the game, I said, ‘If the dots fall on the floor from your pile, you have to put them back in the center.’” When it happened, she wanted to argue about that rule. I say, “That is the rule. I told you ahead of time. The dots go there.” Had she complied with it we could go on.

But she started getting mean about it, arguing and such, so I say: “Oh, I am so sorry. I guess the game is done since you don’t want to play by the rules.” And I put the game away.

Kids that argue their way out of everything need to have a very small world where they keep bumping into the fences until they learn to respect the boundaries and play in the middle. Being consistent and following through is important.



Cause and Effect for Consequences

Don't let the kids sway you by charm or arguing out of the consequence but also try to keep it close to cause and effect. You did _____ so now this _____.

It must be closely related and not complicated.



Chores and Arguing

Let the child know you don't want an argument (as a warning).

“I don't want to argue, let's just get this done. But if you chose to argue, then _____ (i.e. I will set the timer and you will need to get this done by yourself).”

All tasks and chores need to be done with a parent until we get much better obedience.



Ask Properly for a Request

Encourage and teach the child how to ask properly for a request. This can prevent arguments.

For example, you are laying out the activity for the afternoon and the child does not want to do it. This is not a proper request. If they comply with the activity but are able to say calmly, “I am tired of this box of toys, is there a different one I can do?” then we can honor that.

Right now they make those decisions on their own way too much. They must request so they learn to express wants and needs properly. Even little toddlers can learn this.



Ask Properly or it is a “No”

Teach them if they don't give good responses, or make a request properly, it is going to be a no and will not work.

What you can say:

- “Oops try again.”
- “Use a full sentence please.”
- “Please try again and say what you need nicely.”
- Or just wait.



You Get to Change First

You cannot teach a child to stop arguing if you as the parent don't change your part.

It may seem picky about how we have you change the way you direct the child, or want you to lead the day, or not send them to do tasks or chores, but it changes the dynamic and that is crucial.

Nothing will change without the changes happening from the leadership in the home.



Set the Limits

Set the limits every time before the activity. EVERY TIME.

State the plan and the expectations as well for what happens if things don't go well.

Example 1: “We are going to have snack and the choices will be on the table. If you don't want this choice, you don't have to eat. But I expect you to sit at the table with us during snack time. Please don't ask for anything else. The answer will be no. If you don't want to eat, it's ok, we will eat again in two hours at dinner.”

Example 2: “We are going to the store because I need to get a few things. Please don't ask for things. I have a list and I know what we need. If you can't stay by the cart and have problems in the store, we will leave immediately and go to the car and have to go home where we have XYZ to do.”



Acknowledge but Go On

Acknowledge the small changes, but don't go overboard in it.

A simple, "thank you for doing that in the time allowed, now we can go out and play," is enough for oppositional kids.



Kids who Listen and Obey

Keep in mind the kind of relationship you want from your children. You want to give hugs and cuddles, and have fun as a family, but when these are demanded from us it sets the relationships up to be full of strife.

Instead, we want kids who will listen and follow directions. They will learn this from you, and then later from other adults, employers, etc. It's important for kids to hear your voice and follow instructions.



Don't Give Up!

I work with families to **restore the hope of what your family can be**--not what is has been.

Many other parents are working on the same things.

Repetition is key; keep giving the same consistent responses.

