



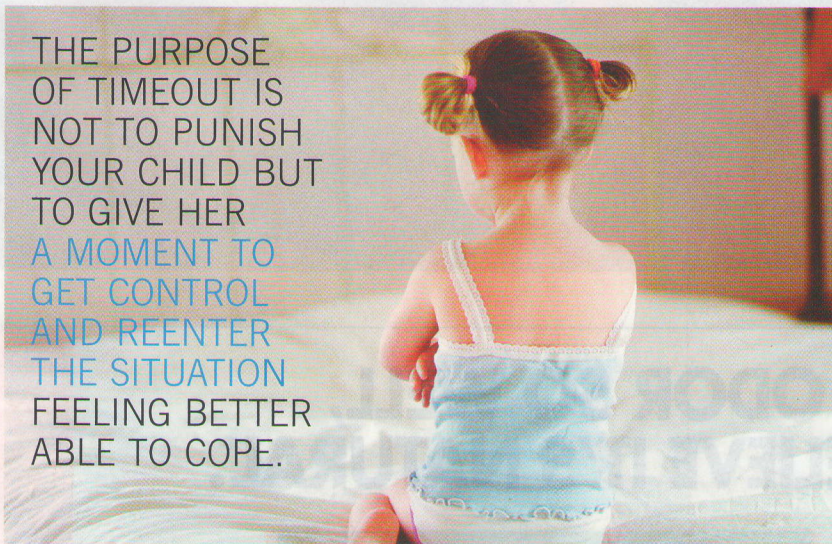
# In or Out?

We ask top child-raising experts about the pros and cons of using timeouts

**What do you** do when your adorable toddler engages in not-so-adorable behavior, like hitting the friend who snatches her toy, biting Mommy, or throwing her unwanted plate of peas across the room? Is it time for...timeout?

Timeout—removing a child from the environment where misbehavior has occurred to a “neutral,” unstimulating space—can be effective for toddlers if

family resource and education company in Seattle, and author of several parenting books, including *The No-Cry Discipline Solution*. “The purpose of timeout is not to punish your child but to give him a moment to get control and reenter the situation feeling better able to cope.” It also gives you the chance to take a breath and step away from the conflict for a moment so you don’t lose your temper.



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it’s used in the right way, says Jennifer Shu, MD, an Atlanta pediatrician, editor of *Baby and Child Health* and co-author of *Food Fights: Winning the Nutritional Challenges of Parenthood Armed With Insight, Humor, and a Bottle of Ketchup* and *Heading Home With Your Newborn: From Birth to Reality*. “Especially at this age, timeout shouldn’t be punitive. It’s a break in the action, a chance to nip what they’re doing in the bud.”

Timeouts shouldn’t be imposed in anger, agrees Elizabeth Pantley, president of Better Beginnings, a

You can also try warding off the kind of behavior that might warrant a timeout with “time-in.” That means noticing when your children’s behavior is starting to get out-of-hand and spending five or 10 minutes with them *before* they seriously misbehave. “It’s like a preemptive strike,” Shu says. “Once they’ve gotten some quality time with you, you can usually count on reasonably OK behavior for a little while.”—Gina Shaw



## DISCIPLINARY DO'S & DON'TS

Jennifer Shu, MD, says a good stage to initiate timeouts is when your toddler is around age 2. Here are a few guidelines.

- Do** remove your child from the situation.
- Do** tell him what the problem behavior was. Use simple words like “No hitting. Hitting hurts.” Don’t berate your child.
- Do** place her in a quiet spot—the same place every time, if possible. For young toddlers, this may have to be a play yard or other enclosed space.
- Don’t** keep him there long—the usual rule of thumb is one minute per year of age.
- Do** sit down with your child after timeout is over and reassure her with a hug while you “debrief” by saying something

like, “We’re not going to hit anymore, right?” **Don’t** belabor what the child did wrong. Instead, ask her to show you how she can play nicely.



About half of parents use timeouts. Others remove privileges (41.5%), yell (13%), or spank “often or always” (8.5%).

