
Negotiating with Your Preschooler

How to make your day run more smoothly

Now that your child is older, both of you may have places to go and people to see. The trouble is, your preschooler may have ideas for the day that do not always match what you have planned. You're facing a showdown with your preschooler who is attempting to establish his independence. No one wants to spend the day coaxing and cajoling a preschooler, or tangled in an all-day power struggle. Use humor, some give and take, and ongoing guidance to help both of you make it through the day.

How to negotiate with your independent preschooler

- **Give your child some choice.** Your preschooler should not be in complete control at all times, but it is a good idea to allow her to make a few simple decisions each day that impact her life as this will help her gain confidence. These decisions may be choosing what's for breakfast each morning or choosing what to wear from a few weather-appropriate choices you offer.
- **Use humor.** Laughter can change a stressful moment into a fun one. Your preschooler will probably laugh at things that go against what she considers normal. If she balks at putting on her coat, put it on the family dog; her laughter can lead to her wanting to wear the coat.
- **Encourage good behavior.** Paying more attention to your child's good behavior will help to reinforce the behavior that you want to see. Saying, "I see that you put some toys away," shows what you want, while saying, "This room is still messy!" does not help your child understand the behavior you'd like to see.
- **Help your child transition through the day.** Keeping a regular routine will help your child know what to expect and make transitions easier for both of you. Even with a routine, your preschooler may need time to adjust to the different parts of the day. Letting him know when a transition is coming up can help him prepare and move onto something new more easily. Divide transitions into smaller steps, for example tell her when she has 10 minutes left until she needs to pick up her toys. Some kids will need longer or shorter transition time, so pay attention to your child's needs.

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