

## The Importance of Crystal-Clear Rules for your Child

The world is a far more scary and complicated place than it was when you were a child. As a result, it's imperative that you set adequate yet fair boundaries with your child. It's a very important role in your parenting responsibilities. Children must make difficult decisions each day, and if they don't have clear, firm boundaries set, they may not always make the wisest choice. Limits teach children proper restraint in social and individual activities and provide children with necessary structure and security to assist in healthy development. Setting limits also provide children with guidance before they have an opportunity to get into trouble, thus making them more successful with everyday life.

A child's age and developmental level needs to be considered when setting limits. All children have a need for independence and individualization; however, they also need structure, security and parental involvement. It goes without saying that the needs of a 2-year old vary greatly than those of a teenager. A toddler has a strong desire to explore and investigate, but parameters need to be set to ensure their safety while doing so. Teenagers need to be able to be an individual and be independent, but with strong parental guidance and influence, are more likely to make smart choices in difficult situations.

Limits should be discussed and set prior to the situation. Though situations arise that weren't planned on, daily situations should have set limits and expectations. A teenager who breaks curfew may have the privilege of going out with friends revoked until they learn respect for the rules. A child who misbehaves while playing with a friend may need to be separated from the fun until they can learn to properly behave.

Children respond in a positive manner in an environment in which they know what to expect and what is expected of them. A child will be more respectful towards rules and more willing to abide by them if the rules are clear and consistent. Additionally, it's crucial that once a limit is set that they caregiver stick to it. A child is less likely to try and manipulate a caregiver into changing the limits when their experience has been that there's no bending on the limits. And remember, you are the one who sets the limits and lays down the law. There's no need to argue with your child. Be firm and consistent and they are less likely to challenge the rules and will accept the consequences.