

## Positive Parenting of Preschoolers

# Going Shopping

**Shopping can be an enjoyable activity for the whole family. It can also be difficult when children are tired, hungry, bored, overexcited or misbehaving. Attractive items placed at child level do not make shopping any easier for parents. This tip sheet gives some suggestions to help you teach your preschooler how to behave responsibly on shopping trips.**

Teaching new behaviour and skills takes time and effort at first, but will make shopping easier and more enjoyable in the long-term. To make a start, plan a series of short practice shopping trips spending about five minutes in a shop. Leave longer shopping trips until your child can manage shorter ones.

## Before Going Shopping

### **Maintain Your Child's Routine**

Take your child shopping at times when they are most likely to enjoy it, not during usual sleep or mealtimes when they are likely to be tired or hungry.

### **Prepare Your Child for the Trip**

Before you all leave home, tell your child where you will be going, what you will be buying and when you will be back.

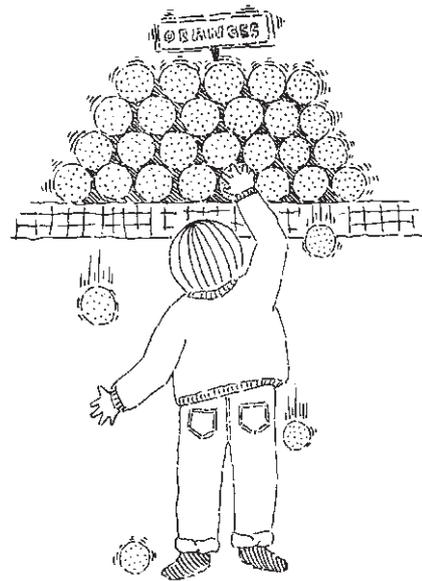
### **Explain the Shopping Rules**

Before you go into the shop, remind your child of the simple rules you would like followed. After a while your preschooler will be able to say what the rules are. Rules should tell your child what to do rather than what not to do. Here are some examples:

- Stay close to Mum or Dad.
- Do as you are asked.
- Walk, don't run down aisles.
- Speak in a pleasant voice.
- Ask before you touch.

### **Set a Goal**

If there was a problem last time you went shopping, simply and calmly say what it was and what you would like your child to do differently this time—*Last time we went shopping, you forgot to stay close to Mummy.*



*Today, let's see if you can stay close to Mummy.*

## **Talk About Rewards**

For the first few shopping trips, you may like to reward your child for following the rules. Suggested rewards include going to the park, special time with Mum or Dad, a coin-operated ride or a special snack.

## **Talk About Consequences**

Explain to your child how you will use quiet time and time-out if they break the shopping rules (see below).

## **While You Are Shopping**

### **Praise Your Child**

When your child is behaving well and following the shopping rules, give lots of praise. Say exactly what pleases you—*Maria, you are walking really well today.*

### **Involve Your Child in the Shopping Trip**

Some fun activities while shopping include:

- Finding things on the shelves.
- Passing things to you.
- Finding the price of an item.
- Counting purchases.
- Putting things in the trolley for you.
- Spotting different colours, shapes and sizes of items.

### **Remind Your Child of the Rules**

If your child breaks a rule, act straight away. Tell your child what they have done wrong and what to do instead—*Sarah, stop stamping your feet. Walk quietly.* Praise your child if they do as you ask.

## ***Use Quiet Time or Time-Out to Deal with Problem Behaviour***

If your child breaks the rule again, or refuses to do as you have asked, put them in quiet time. Quiet time involves removing your attention from your child and having them be quiet for a short time. Tell your child to stand quietly in the aisle. Wait for 30 seconds of quiet before you start shopping again. If your child begins to whine loudly, yell or throw a tantrum, you may need to leave your shopping at a checkout and take them outside the shop. Find a safe place for your child to sit, such as a seat outside the shop or in your car. Wait beside them (without talking) until they have been quiet for 30 seconds, then take them back to the shop. Praise your child as soon as they behave well again. Be prepared for mixed reactions from other shoppers and for your child's sake be consistent and see the consequence through.

If your child does not quieten down, as a last resort go home and take them straight to time-out. Time-out involves taking your child to an uninteresting but safe room or space and having them be quiet for a short time. Tell your child they must be quiet before they can come out of time-out. Give this reminder even though your child might be upset or angry. When your child has been quiet for two minutes let them out of time-out. Watch for them behaving well and praise them as soon as possible.

## ***Reward Your Child***

As soon as possible after leaving the shop, you can give your child a reward if they have followed the shopping rules.

## **After Shopping**

### ***Review the Trip***

Praise your child's successes, and if necessary, briefly and calmly describe any rules your child forgot to follow—*Alex, I was really happy with you today. You stayed close to Mummy the whole time. Next time let's see if you can follow our touching rule. Remember you only touch things when Mummy says you can.*

## **Key Steps**

- At first, keep shopping trips short and frequent.
- Try not to break your child's sleeping and eating routines.
- Remind your child of the rules for shopping.
- Involve your child in shopping activities.
- Praise and reward your child for following the rules.
- Act as soon as a problem occurs.
- Review the trip with your child.

## **If Problems Persist**

*Here is another strategy you can try:*

- Explain to your child that they can earn a stamp or sticker every two minutes or for every aisle passed, if they are following the shopping rules.
- Tell your child that these stamps or stickers can earn a special reward at the end of the shopping trip.
- Decide on how many stamps or stickers your child must earn to get the reward and what the reward will be.
- Get everything ready before you go shopping. You will need a small self-inking stamp or a sheet of small stickers such as stars or dots.
- While you are shopping, if your child follows the rules put a stamp or sticker on the back of their hand and praise them at the agreed times.
- Deal with problem behaviour as suggested above.
- When you have finished shopping, count the number of stamps or stickers your child has earned. If they have reached the goal, give them the reward.
- Gradually increase the time your child must wait between stickers, until you can phase out the reward altogether. Continue to praise good behaviour from time to time.

***See the booklet 'Positive Parenting' for more information. If you have any questions or have tried these strategies and are concerned about your child's progress, contact the centre where you were given this tip sheet.***



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