

Take a stand!

How to gain the upper hand with your kids

Are you tired of battling with your children? Are you angry and frustrated because you can't get them to do what you ask?

Here are five typical flashpoints — and the do's and don'ts of putting your foot down at home.

Toddler tantrums

Your three-year-old has a tantrum in the supermarket.

Don't shout or argue with him as it will just make things worse. **Don't** call him stupid or silly or smack him — it won't stop the tantrum. He may have lost control but you need to retain your composure.

Do refuse to give in to his tantrum. Say: 'I know that you're angry but the answer is still no.' (This also works with older children and teens.) Pick him up, go



outside and give him time and space to calm down. Then give him a cuddle and turn his attention to something else.

Bedtime boundaries

Your 13-year-old goes to bed on time at 10pm but is on his laptop and mobile phone until midnight.

Don't let him decide when to come off the

phone or internet. He needs his sleep — eight to nine hours of it. Teachers say too many teens fall asleep in class.

Do insist he leaves his laptop and phone in the living room at bedtime. Then agree logical consequences, not punishments, if he refuses.

Yes, there may be tears and tantrums, but

stand firm. Reward compliance by letting him have the laptop and phone on later at weekends and during school holidays.

Getting up and ready for school

Your seven-year-old needs to be called several times to wake up and then she takes ages to eat her breakfast and get ready.

Don't nag or be in a rush yourself. And don't leave it to the morning to get organised. Shoes, bags, car keys, mobiles and other essentials should be put in the same place every day, always, to prevent last-minute panic.

Do help your child take responsibility for getting herself up. Give her an alarm clock.

Be reasonable with your expectations — giving one task at a time is often the best approach. Say positive things like, 'We need to be out of the door in ten minutes', rather than, 'You're going to be late again.'

You can allow her

to watch cartoons if she does get up and is ready on time.

Doing homework

You discover that your 11-year-old hasn't been doing her homework. She says she finds it too difficult.

Don't do the homework for your child and don't get stressed about it. Losing your patience will knock her confidence and discourage her from coming to you for help



in the future.

Do talk to her teacher if it's too much or it's not clear, and find out how you can help. Ask the teacher for feedback on how your child is doing.

Let your child decide when she wants to do her homework but try to keep it to a regular time.

Helping out around the home

Your 11- and 14-year-olds drag their heels when it comes to helping out with household chores.

Don't insist they do them immediately — they have lives and commitments too. Don't bribe them or keep a star chart. They're too old at this stage. Instead they need to learn to negotiate and compromise.

Do give notice and set reasonable time limits for when you want chores done. Give children a choice and get them to write themselves notes so they remember they have chores to do. Encourage them to listen to music. They'll soon be singing while they work!

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