



TALK LINE
FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

Guidelines for Disciplining Your Teen

Communicate reasonable limits in advance.

- **Talk through rules with your teen** before a discipline situation arises.
- **Let your teen have a say.** Your teen is more likely to follow rules and consequences when he/she helps decide what they should be.
- **Be specific and concise** about rules.
- **Put rules in writing.** You can set up a parent/teen behavior contract with ground rules and consequences. (See [examples of behavior contracts](#).)
- **Be consistent.** This helps your teen understand that limits will be enforced.
- **Be fair.** Avoid setting rules that your teen can't follow.
- **Pick your battles.** Make sure your teen still has the chance to be independent, and don't nitpick.
- **Be prepared to explain the reasons for rules.**
- **Teach your values when setting limits.**

Enforce consequences that match the behavior.

- **Avoid punishing when you're angry.** The punishment may be one you can't live with.
- **Impose only those penalties you are prepared to carry out.**
- **Apply consequences related to the behavior** (*i.e.*, making your teen replace something he/she broke when acting reckless.)
- **Don't overdo discipline.**
- **Consequences should help your teen learn and prepare for the future.**
- Consequences that often work with teens include, **loss of a privilege** (*i.e.*, computer time, cell phone, allowance), **performing an action that makes up for the harm** he/she caused, **community service**, **additional responsibilities** around the house, and **grounding** (usually for a short time.)
- **Spanking and hitting DON'T work.** Physical punishment teaches teens to hit and causes them to lose respect for their parents.
- **Talk to your teen after any confrontation.**

Recognize and reward your teen for positive behavior.

Be a good role model. Your actions are even more important than your words.

For more information, see [OneToughJob.org](#); [ApaCenter](#); and [Psychology Today](#)