

# What to do when kids say no

When a child says no to a request, sits and does nothing when expected to do something, and continues a behavior that the child has been asked to stop, that's defiance, according to Dr. Daniel Waschbusch of the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute and professor, Penn State College of Medicine. Here are some strategies for dealing with defiance:

- **Address the issue before it gets worse.**
- **Establish rules.** Have house rules that are very clear about the things that are most likely to lead to conflicts or to noncompliance. Kids will know that's the rule and that battle won't have to be fought over and over again.
- **Give clear commands.** Rather than saying "Would you mind going up to your room and picking up your toys sometime?" say "Go to your room and pick up your toys right now." Be clear and concise, and give a specific time frame.
- **Give instruction when you're sure you have their attention.** Don't give an instruction while the child is playing video games. Chances are they're going to be attending to the video game and not to you.
- **Give them warning.** It's better to warn a child in advance that they are going to bed soon rather than waiting and telling them it's time to go right now. Any warning can make a big difference.
- **Reward the positive.**
- **Have a game plan.** Prevent a situation from escalating by preparing strategies in advance. Doing this removes thinking on the spot and relying on emotions. Avoid intensifying a conflict by having your playbook ready.
- **Think long term.** Think about it as an ongoing process. Keep at it. Improvements will be seen over time but don't expect everything to get better by a certain date. Behavior doesn't change overnight. And remember, sometimes it gets worse before it gets better.

