

## Getting Better at Waiting

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Some kids are born with a tendency to be impulsive; others are born better able to not give in to temptation. Studies have shown that kids who learn self-discipline early in life are more positive, self-motivated, determined in the face of difficulties, and able to delay gratification in the pursuit of their goals. Conversely, kids who do not master self-discipline are more troubled, inflexible, and indecisive, and less self-confident as adults.

If we want our kids to develop better self-control, we parents have to control our own tendency to protect or indulge them; instead, we can help them learn to wait their turn, delay gratification, and resist temptation.



How can we do this? One way is by modeling how to wait. If we can keep our cool by patiently waiting to pay the bridge toll, or calmly standing in a long line at the bank, our kids will begin to imitate this patient behavior in similar circumstances. Another way to teach our kids the art of waiting is by guiding them through their own "patience practice" in their everyday activities.

### When To Do It

After school for one week

### What To Do

1. Jot down two or three situations in which your kids can practice delaying gratification: completing a task before moving on to a desired activity, understanding and accepting when a desired purchase must be postponed, or controlling an impulse when it's not appropriate. Here are some examples to get your thinking started:
  - Finishing dinner before getting dessert
  - Being very quiet while you are on the phone
  - Not eating breakfast until dressed for school
  - Finishing homework without an extended break
  - Brushing teeth before getting to read a bedtime story
  - Not buying sneakers until they go on sale or are really needed
2. Select one area to practice with each of your kids. The idea is to have them try and master the new behavior. An honest effort counts, even if they need a few attempts before they succeed. (That's why it's called practice!)
3. Set up a simple worksheet like this one to keep track of their progress and consider posting it on the fridge or another favorite spot where everyone can see their progress.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Activity							

4. Explain to your kids how the exercise will work, which days you will be doing it on, and what specifically you are expecting of them.
5. If you are practicing an activity that involves improving wait time, when they begin their exercise you can mark the start time and see how they do. You can use a timer to see how long can they can wait without a break and record how long they were able to wait on their tracking sheet. If all goes well, their waiting ability will increase substantially by the end of the week.
6. If you are practicing completing tasks before moving on to another activity, you can monitor progress on the tracking sheet with a few metrics: "Good effort," "Almost there," "Able to wait!" For example, your kid may be holding on, bursting with what she wants to say, and not quite able to wait until your phone call is over. You mark "Good effort" on the worksheet and let her know she'll have more opportunities to show she can wait through the whole call.
7. By the end of the week we suggest you reward your kids for their efforts by making a favorite dinner, going to the movies, or another desired activity they help to choose.

#### Bonus

1. Take time to examine your own level of self-control.
2. Select two or three areas in which you could practice delayed gratification and patience, such as waiting in a long line, being kept on hold by customer service, or being delayed in a traffic jam.
3. As you find yourself in these settings, be conscious of how patient you are or are not being.
4. By developing your own self-control, you can not only ease your own stress and frustration but also set a better example for your kids.

### What You Will Need

- Paper/Pencil
- Timer
- Worksheet to track and record results

### Talk About It

How did your kids like the exercise? Was it hard to do? Did anything make it easier as the week went on? Do they want to try it again with another activity? Why or why not?