

## **Saying NO!**

No! don't run! No! don't bite! No! don't touch! NOOOO!

There are parents of toddlers who spend most of the day saying no. It's exhausting, particularly because these little sweethearts don't ever seem to hear. But what's a harried parent to do? Toddlers want to get into everything. They move at the speed of light (except when you're in a hurry) and they have no obvious sense of boundaries.

The problem is that we say no so often that it loses its meaning. On top of that, toddlers seem to hear only the last word spoken so what the toddler hears is, run, bite, touch. Whoops, that wasn't the point.

The other problem is that even if he would actually like to cooperate, odds are he's not sure what you want. He's much too young to have the life experience to allow him to work it out. So if he doesn't run, what should he do? Seems obvious to us, but not necessarily to our little one. In the absence of an alternative he does what he really wants to do which is run.

It may sound contradictory at first, but the best way to make your child understand 'no', is to turn it into a 'yes'. You make his life simpler if you just tell him what it is you want him to do.

She's mobile, she's curious and she's unclear on the rules. She also wants to win your affection so the more you can help her do the right thing, the happier you both will be.

However, it is easier said than done. It requires hands-on parenting and because she has a short attention span and memory at this age, it takes repetition.

For example, you're at the swimming pool and your youngster would like nothing more than to tear around the slippery pool edge. Short of staying away from pools for the summer, what can you do? When you arrive, get down to his level and look him right in the eye and point to the tile. "This is slippery and hard. If you run on this, you will fall down and get an owie. You need to walk." Then take his hand and walk with him on the tile.

Every time he seems ready to stop walking and run on the tile, repeat the lesson quickly and clearly, then move on. It will take a while before the message registers, but hey, by the time he's eighteen he'll have it figured out.

Later, take him to the grass around the pool. "This is soft, you can run on this."

The best way to maintain your sanity in your home is to create a safe environment that simply has few obstacles to her interest, curiosity and need to explore. Make your house a place filled with things she can touch, and play and experiment with.

Children have different temperaments. You may have an intensely visual child who needs lots to look at. Try putting posters on the wall at her eye level. Buy cheap, colorful posters and place them touching the baseboard. Let her look, touch and even rip if she desires and she will satisfy her love of visual play.

Other kids put everything in their mouths. This is a challenge because you need to remove everything that might be harmful. This includes your purse, which may have pills, make-up, buttons or keys, which can hurt your toddler.

The trick is to pay attention to the times you find yourself saying 'no'. Then remove the offending object. If he spends a great deal of his day being a little gardener with the plants in the living room, move them to higher ground or even another room for the time being. Meanwhile, foster his interest in playing in the dirt by heading off to your outside garden or the sandbox and the local park. There is a time and a place for everything.

That's easy when it's knick knacks or plants attracting her interest. What about the electronics? The knobs on your TV and DVD player are like magnets to toddler hands. Be creative. Create a barrier, see if you can move it, cover it with a blanket so it disappears. Sounds silly but trust me, the fewer impediments your intrepid toddler has to satisfying his healthy curiosity the better.