

Distraction: behaviour management tool

Distraction often works well as a behaviour management tool, especially for young children. Diverting a young child's interest and attention can help you avoid situations that might otherwise result in difficult behaviour.

Using distraction as a behaviour management tool

Distraction is a behaviour management strategy that comes naturally to parents in situations where behaviour might be a problem – for example, when children are getting cranky, when they've been sitting still for a long time, when sharing or taking turns with others is getting hard and so on.

Pointing out something interesting, starting a simple game, pulling funny faces – you've probably come up with many tricks like these to distract your child.

Distraction usually works. It can also be a good way of keeping children away from dangerous objects and activities. So it's a great option for managing your child's behaviour in many situations.

Tips for distracting

Here are distraction tips that usually work for **children of all ages**:

- Give your child something else to do. Introduce a new activity, toy or game, or even show children something new they can do with the toy they already have.
- Change the scene. Position children so they can see different things, or move a child to a new spot.
- Think ahead. Have a few ideas for fun activities. It could be as simple as planning some outside play for your child when you can see that she's getting bored with drawing inside.
- If you're out and about, take some attractive and fun toys that you can pull out when you need them. If your child might be hungry, have some tasty and healthy snacks on hand too.

Distraction can work for **older children** too. Here are some ideas:

- Change the topic of conversation.
- Introduce a simple game or activity – for example, suggest your children try a jigsaw or a game of Uno if they say they have nothing to do.
- Suggest something else your child could do when you can see that things aren't going well. For example, you could say, 'Looks like you're feeling frustrated with your homework. What about going outside and having a ride on your bike?'

It's easy to suggest some screen time when you need a quick distraction. Child development experts recommend limiting children's daily screen time. This is because real-life interactions with you and others are much better for your child's wellbeing and development.