

## Parenting Tools: Paraphernalia for Child Discipline

Ask any electrician or plumber what tools are needed to do their jobs and you're likely to hear about wrenches, hammers, and measuring devices. Ask any parent the same question and you're likely to receive a blank stare. Most "parenting tools" involve non-tangible traits such as patience, assertiveness, determination, and wisdom (to name a few). Other parenting tools involve actual "materials" that can be used to instill firm, fair, structured and consistent discipline into a child's daily regimen. Below is a list and short description of some common parenting tools: **Kitchen Timer:** Digital timers are a great way to keep track of the amount of time a child spends in time out. They can also be used in many other ways, for instance:

- If siblings are arguing over a toy, the timer can be used to give each child a fair amount of time to use the toy ("You can play for 10 minutes, and then your sister can play for 10 minutes").
- A timer can be used to get a child to bed on time ("You have 15 minutes to get your pyjamas on and to brush your teeth before bedtime. If you are not on your bed in 15 minutes, then you will have an earlier bedtime tomorrow night.")
- A timer can be used to signal the end of a routine ("Play time is over in 5 minutes.")
- Homework breaks can be given using a timer ("You can have a 10 minute break for every half-hour of study time.")

### Behaviour Charts:

Charts can be used to track just about anything a child does. There are standard behaviour charts, chore charts, hygiene charts, homework charts, bedtime charts, and many other options for parents to use. Charts are easy to use and can be highly effective as long as the rewards and consequences are perceived by the child to be desirable (rewards) and non-desirable (consequences).

### Behaviour Contracts:

Contracts are an effective way of establishing clear rules and expectations for your child. Curfew, bedtime, chores, general behaviour, allowance, and many other topics can be addressed in a behaviour contract. Also known as parenting contracts, child contracts, or behaviour agreements.

### Time-Out Spots:

A simple carpet square (about 18" X 18") is all that is needed as a spot for your child to do a time out. A carpet square such as this can be moved around as needed and also provides a consistent spot for time outs. Also known as a naughty spot, time out mat, or "cooling off" spot.

### Books that Teach Lessons:

There are many great books out there for children that teach such things as character traits, social skills, life lessons, and problem solving. Read to your child and discuss the story. Use this as an opportunity to teach the moral of the story or to point out interesting facts within the story. Utilize the library if necessary.

### Token Economy:

A token economy is nothing more than issuing a special "token" to your child each time he or she demonstrates a desired behaviour, then allowing him or her to trade in the tokens for special rewards or privileges. Parents can use tokens, marbles in a jar, paper tickets, or any other item that represents a "token."

Each of these tools has its limits and none will prove to be a "fix-all" for persistent problem behaviours. If you are in need of some parenting tools or other ideas and you don't know where to turn, try visiting [www.behaviour-contracts.com](http://www.behaviour-contracts.com). Here you'll find all kinds of prewritten behaviour contracts, behaviour charts, and other parenting tools.