



Ignoring Misbehaviour

We have probably all been told “just ignore them” by a well-meaning friend, and thought, “easy for you to say.” Here is how to use the ignoring technique effectively.

It only works alongside positive attention

Ignoring only works if children are already getting plenty of positive attention (Special Time) elsewhere. All children crave attention and will repeat behaviours that get noticed, so keep praising good behaviour generously.

What can (and cannot) be ignored

Hitting, refusing instructions, or breaking house rules need a consequence, not ignoring. But low-level, annoying behaviours like whining, bickering, or back-chat can often be dealt with by calmly ignoring them. This takes perseverance: stay calm, show no visible frustration, and the behaviour will fade as children learn it does not get them what they want.

Redirect, do not dwell

The moment the whining stops, be ready with a distraction: ask them to help lay the table or choose pudding. There is no need to revisit the problem, just move on. They will learn that arguing does not work.

A word of warning

Things often get worse before they get better when you first try ignoring a behaviour; children will test whether you really mean it. Stick with it and it does pay off.