

Why give your child choice?

Tips for children
aged 2 to 4 years



**Sure Start
Children's Centres**
Worcestershire

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Why give your child choice?

- Offering your child a choice can encourage them to co-operate as they feel in control of the decision.
- Offering children the opportunity to make good choices helps them to develop a skill that they will need in later life.
- It's more difficult for them to say "no" and so can reduce conflict in the home.

How do I give them choice?

- Initially give them two or three things to choose from such as "would you like or"? Try to ensure that you don't move between the extremes of no choice and lots of choice.
- Only give them choices that you can agree to. For example don't use "do you want lunch now?"
- Involve them in making choices in everyday life for example what they want to wear, what they would like in their sandwich and so on.
- Remember to **praise** them for making good choices and describe what the behaviour is that you like!
- Always deliver their choices in a calm, clear tone of voice.

What if they won't make a good choice?

If your child says that they don't want either choice, then the response could be "If you don't choose one, I will choose one for you."

If the refusal continues, then a consequence would need to be introduced. For example, if they are misbehaving in a busy street and try to run off they could be given two choices:

"You can walk next to me and hold my hand" or "If you do not hold my hand I will have to put you in your reins."

If they are arguing with their brother or sister about which TV programme they are going to watch:

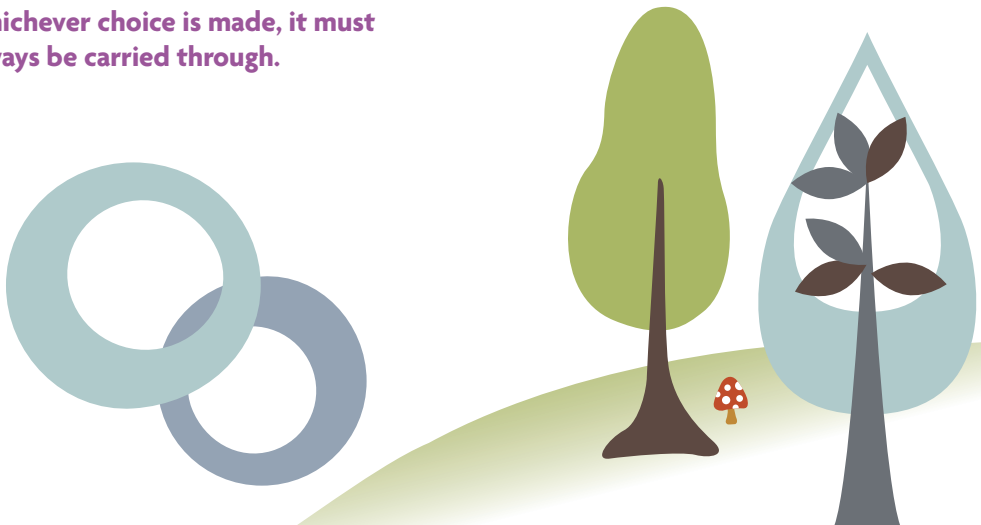
"Stop fighting and take turns to watch the programme that you want to watch" or "if that doesn't happen I will turn the TV off."

Whichever choice is made, it must always be carried through.

Steps for giving choices:

1. Be specific and clear about the choice of the behaviour
2. If you have had to move on to a consequence, be clear about the positive and negative consequences
3. Relate the consequence to the behaviour
4. Choose consequences that mean something to the child
5. Don't give a choice when there isn't one
6. Choose a consequence that you can keep to
7. Give your child 'take up time' after telling them the choice.

For example, "You can clear up your toys now and we will have time for a story, or later and no story!"



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