



Challenging Behavior Tip Sheet: At the Grocery Store

“When we go to the grocery store, my child runs down the aisle and tantrums when they don’t get what they want.”

What you can do:

Talk with your children before you go into the store and tell them how they should act when they get into the store. Use positive statements (DO this) instead of negative statements (DON’T do). Also, let them know what will happen if they do run down the aisle or don’t get what they want.

- Before you go into the store, tell your child that they need to either stand next to the cart or stay next to you the whole time.
- Tell them what will happen if they do run away. Be prepared to follow through. This could be anything from losing TV time or putting away a toy when they get home, or leaving the store and sitting outside for a timeout.
- While it’s inconvenient to immediately stop shopping, following through on giving a consequence to behaviors is very important. You can leave your cart in the store and always come back to it.
- If your child is getting bored, try to make grocery shopping fun by giving them ways to participate and help or playing games. Kids enjoy having special jobs to do.
- Also, to save time, plan ahead what you’re going to buy. If you know it’s going to be a long trip, bring along some toys.
- Have them carry a basket if you’re just picking up a few items.
- If you’ve made a list of what to get, let them hold it and give them a pen to check off items once they go in the cart.
- Play an “I Spy” game. Ask them to look for a certain color, letter, or number. Or pick an object up ahead in the aisle and only tell the color of the object. Say, “I spy something red. What do you think it is?” Then ask your child to guess what it is. Take turns choosing objects.
- When you can tell your child is getting fidgety, bring out some toys for them to play with that you’ve brought along.
- If you’ve brought along coupons, give them one at a time to your child and have them search for those particular items in the store.
- Have them look for workers they can say “Thank you” to.