

**Cherubs Preschool**  
**Information Sheet – Alternatives to “No!”**

## Alternatives to "No!" (ages 2 to 4)



### **What to expect at this age**

Maybe your pre-schooler chooses to ignore the word "no," or maybe you'd just like to take a more positive approach to disciplining them. Luckily, you have plenty of alternatives to this overused command — and for good reason.

Children often begin to tune it out, and you may find that it takes ten no's to get your child to respond.

Whether you're trying to keep your pre-schooler out of trouble or teach them right from wrong, try a better, more effective approach than simply saying "no."

### **What to do**

**Rephrase.** Put a positive spin on your request and your pre-schooler is more likely to respond in kind. Instead of saying no, clearly state what they can do instead e.g. instead of saying "No! Don't throw the ball in the living room" for instance, try "Let's go outside to play ball." This gives them something to do rather than something to stop doing.

When you have to act quickly to keep them safe, substitute a more direct warning, such as "Stop!" "Danger!" or "Hot!"

**Offer options.** Your pre-schooler wants to feel independent and in control. So rather than saying 'no' straight away before they ask for some sweets before

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lunch, offer them a choice between e.g. grapes and apple slices. Or let them pick which kind of sweets they would like to eat — *after* lunch.

If they enjoy getting themselves dressed and wearing an inappropriate outfit (like a shorts in December), give them two acceptable outfits to choose between each morning. Though they may not be thrilled with the choices you've offered them, they will eventually learn to accept them.

**Drive them to distraction.** Even a pre-schooler can be easily distracted from a situation. When something catches their eye whist out at the shops, divert their attention with a question e.g. "What should we have for lunch?"

**Avoid the issue.** Whenever you can, keep your pre-schooler out of situations where you'll have to say no, and opt instead for safe environments that encourage their sense of adventure and curiosity. Your home should still be conscientiously childproofed, with dangerous and valuable items kept out of their reach.

And choose places where they are free to explore — the playground or your relatives big back garden, for instance. You can't isolate your child from all situations where you'll have to say no, of course, but life will be easier for both of you — and you'll be able to say yes more often — if you limit them.

Keep in mind, though, that many pre-schoolers enjoy shopping and will behave quite well — *if* you take a few precautions. Plan shopping trips for times when your child has had a sleep and try not to go for too long — an hour or two at the shops is plenty.

**Pick your battles.** Life presents plenty of meaningful opportunities to teach your child discipline. Don't go looking for extras. If they start splashing in a puddle and you're on your way home anyway, why not let them? If they want to wear their Halloween costume to the shops what's the harm? Indulge their sense of adventure, fun, and exploration whenever you can. If they are safe and you don't *have* to say no.

**Say it like you mean it.** Of course, when their behaviour does matter and they might get hurt or they might hurt someone else, alternatives to no just won't work. Say "no" firmly (but calmly): "No! Don't pull the cat's tail." An amused "No, no, sweetie" sends your pre-schooler mixed messages and certainly won't discourage them.

Remember, always praise your child for good listening.