



## Parenting the Preschooler

### Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

# What do you do to stop your child's whining?

## Ages & Stages

**PRECHOOLER** A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

**YOUNG CHILD** A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

## Minding Our Language

**Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.**

“Whining” is what we call it when someone talks and cries at the same time or speaks in an annoying sing-song or high-pitched way. Most adults don't like it when children whine, but all children whine at some point. Whining is part of the way preschoolers learn to communicate.

During the preschool years, children are getting much better at using their words, but most still cry a lot too. When they are tired, frustrated, disappointed, or hungry, young children often communicate by whining. Children also whine to get attention, especially if they have found that it works! If your child whines, try some of the following techniques to help both of you get through this stage:

- Make sure your child knows what whining is. They may not understand that whining is an annoying way to communicate. After all, in their view it is good that they are using their words when they whine!
- Label whining when you hear it to be sure your child knows when they are whining. (*“I hear a whiny voice. I can't understand what you're saying when you talk with that voice. Please use your big boy voice instead.”*)
- Use your preschooler's toys and pretend they are talking to each other in whiny voices. Your child may be surprised to hear what whining sounds like!
- Record your child's whining voice and normal voice so they can hear the difference.
- Work with your preschooler to name their feelings so they are able to describe how they feel using words.
- Figure out why they are whining. Write down what is happening every time your child whines for a few days. You may see that they whine mostly for attention, or near bedtime when they are tired. Knowing why your child whines can help you decide how to handle it.
- See if something else is going on. Sometimes children are tired or hungry and just need a nap or a snack to stop the whining.
- Acknowledge their feelings. (*“I see you are sad right now, but no cookies before dinner.”*)
- Ignore your child completely when they speak in a way that is not okay with you. If they notice that they do not get attention when they whine, they might just stop.
- Do not give in. Saying yes to get your preschooler to stop whining only encourages them to whine again the next time they want something. Be firm!
- Notice when they talk instead of whine and answer as soon as possible. Remember though, that just because your child asks for something nicely does not mean that you have to give them what they want.
- Hang in there. It can take several weeks of consistent parenting to see changes in young children. Sooner or later your preschooler will understand that whining does not work.

## Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at [www.extension.msu.edu](http://www.extension.msu.edu).

**Extension Extras** (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

**Extension Extras Enrichment Kits** (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children's books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

**Early Childhood Videos** (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include "Perspective Taking," "Family Movies," "Goals of Misbehavior," "Using Thinking and Feeling Words," "The Waiting Game," and "When Siblings Fight."

**Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children** (<https://bit.ly/38XW4Kl>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

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