

Shopping with your children

8. Compliment your children for good behavior and for helping you. Let them know that you believe they can behave, and show them that you appreciate it when they do. Kids are people, too, and they enjoy praise as much as you do. While you're at it, give yourself a pat on the back—you deserve it!

9. Give your children a reward, treat or special privilege for helpful behavior. Here are some ideas to try:

Offer special privileges at home, such as a special video, a friend over for supper, or playing a game with you in the evening.

A “gold star” on a chart that keeps track of good behavior. Purchase stick-on stars, or just use a check mark system. Hang the chart in a prominent place such as the refrigerator door and your children can point to their accomplishments with pride.

Allow children to give the money to the cashier and pick up the change. Most of the time this is done by the parent, so letting your children have the privilege will make them feel important and grown-up.

Buy something special for your child to reward their behavior. At first, especially with younger children, it is important that the rewards or treats happen right away and often, and that you tell them why they are getting a treat. In addition, you can reward the behavior at home. The more your children are rewarded, the more likely they are to continue the good behavior.

10. Become more aware of your own feelings during a shopping trip. Do you usually become angry as the result of a single behavior problem? If so, maybe that's the behavior you want to concentrate on. Do you become upset because of money worries and take it out on your children? Let your children know what is really on your mind.

Are you yelling at your children because you're embarrassed by their behavior? Try to remember that everybody has those feelings; you are not alone if you feel like you're going to lose it with your children. The question is, what are you going to do about it? Are you going to yell and scream or maybe slap your children? Or do you want to try a less painful way to handle the problem?

Learn to recognize when you are getting so frustrated that you might do something to hurt or embarrass yourself or your children. Does your neck get tight, or your stomach ache? Take some deep breaths and try to relax.

Perhaps you can find another adult to discuss the experience you have shopping—someone you can talk with about your anger and embarrassment and how good it feels when your children behave appropriately. Together you may come up with some other positive ways to handle shopping with your children.



Prevent Child Abuse Minnesota
1821 University Avenue, Suite 202-S
Saint Paul, MN 55104

651-523-0099 office
800-621-6322 toll free
651-523-0380 fax

WWW.PCAMN.ORG

1-800-CHILDREN



Prevent Child Abuse
Minnesota

Having fun shopping with your children

Pretend for just a minute that those aren't your kids who just knocked over the tuna display in aisle three. When it's someone else's child who misbehaves we don't usually pay much attention. In fact, it might even seem funny. But when it's your children, you don't think it's very funny. You feel angry and embarrassed—as if all eyes are on you. You wish you could have left your children at home.

Remember: many parents are embarrassed by their children's behavior in stores; you are not alone.

Have you ever wondered what you can do about those uncomfortable feelings, without taking it out on your children?



Here are some ideas that could help improve your shopping experience. None of these ideas will work for everyone, so don't get discouraged. Try it again another day or try something else today. Or come up with some ideas of your own.

It's okay if their behavior doesn't change overnight. The important thing is that you are taking a step in the right direction just by trying.

1. Schedule shopping trips when your children are usually the most agreeable and easy to get along with. For some young children that is after they wake up from a nap. Other children are happiest after they've had a snack or a meal. You won't always have a choice about when to do your shopping, but whenever you do, pick the "happy" times if you're taking your children along.

2. Tell your preschool children the rules *before* you go to the store. Explain that in a store there will be no:

- running (because running is for the playground)
- yelling (because yelling is for outdoors)
- whining or crying for treats (because treats are rewards for good behavior, and whining is not good behavior)

3. Practice shopping with your preschoolers before you take them with you.

- Play "pretend" and talk about what happens on a shopping trip.
- Check out a storybook about shopping at your local library, such as *Shopping Basket* by Birmingham.
- Start out with short trips if you can. Take them along when you need just a loaf of bread or a gallon of milk. After a few short trips, gradually increase the length of the trip.

4. Give them some responsibility. Talk to them about what you are buying. Discuss the colors, shapes and sizes of the items with a younger child, and the cost and uses of them with an older child. Older children can become involved by picking out items that you specify. Give your children the title of "assistant shopper" and make them feel important. Let them choose which can of soup or which bag of apples you will buy.

5. Give your children a "driver's license." Let them push the shopping cart. After they get used to it, they may end up being a real help to you. The license itself can simply be done verbally, or make up a pretend license using a recipe card or another piece of paper.

6. Play games to encourage good behavior. If your children don't stay near you and are constantly running ahead, try the "touching" game. The object is to be within "touching" distance of each other at all times—when arms are spread out you can touch hands. From time to time, do a "touch check" by calling out a signal and seeing if everyone can touch hands. Do the check at least once in every aisle—more times at first until they catch on.

Sometimes the problem is touching too much: handling food and maybe knocking down displays at the same time. Try the "don't touch" game. Make it a contest to see who can touch the fewest things, or who can go the longest without touching something off limits.

7. Let your children know they are misbehaving by telling them "no." Then *don't pay attention* to them until they start behaving according to your rules. For example, if your children are whining and asking for some candy that they know they can't have, tell them "no" and then ignore them until they stop whining. This may be difficult to do at first, but if they continue to get your attention by whining, they will keep it up.

When they learn that you won't give in to their cries but that you'll talk to them while they're behaving, then that desirable behavior will increase.

Be consistent or you will simply be teaching your children that if they yell loud enough and long enough, they can get what they want.

