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# Disciplining Other People's Kids: What Is the Rule?



Judy Koutsky  
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**Is it OK to discipline other people's kids? These parents and experts weigh in.**



Disciplining other people's kids is an issue that evokes strong opinions from parents, babysitters and psychologists alike. Here, folks weigh in on when it's OK and when it's not.

### **A Mom's Viewpoint**

"If another child is at my house for a playdate and is acting inappropriately (hitting, saying inappropriate things or simply not listening), as the adult in charge it's my responsibility to take action to try to correct the situation. That generally means I tell the child that if he doesn't behave (listen, stop hitting or stop doing the offending trait), then he will be going home." -- Maris, mom of three kids in Chicago

"If I'm at the playground and I see another child acting naughty -- taunting another child or not sharing -- and that child's parent or nanny is not stepping in, I feel obligated to say something. Clearly the child does not have a lot of supervision or role models and he'll remember what a stranger says to him." -- Maxine, mom of two kids in New York City

### **A Dad's Viewpoint**

"In my opinion, disciplining other people's kids is not appropriate. When I see another child act up and it's not affecting my child, I don't interfere. However, if the other child is being mean to my child or making my child the target, then I say something." -- David, dad of three kids in Kansas City, Kansas

"When I see other kids act up, I simply walk away and take my kids with me. If you're caught by other parents trying to discipline their child, it is not going to be pretty. Whether you agree or not with how the child is behaving and how the parent is disciplining (or not) is immaterial." - Rex, dad of two kids in Brooklyn

### **A Grandmother's Viewpoint**

"I absolutely think it's every adult's job to make sure kids are behaving appropriately, and this includes disciplining other people's kids. It's impossible for parents to be with their child every

minute, so it's important that other adults weigh in. It really does take a village and ignoring bad behavior in a stranger's child is not going to create a good village." -- Doris, grandmother to eight children in Villa Park, Illinois

### **A Babysitter's Viewpoint**

"I would never discipline another person's child, even if the child is with her sitter/caregiver. People are extremely touchy about the child in their care, and it's not worth the hassle unless the child is in danger (or putting someone else in danger)." -- Loretta, babysitter to one child in Sacramento, California

### **A Teacher's Viewpoint**

"I think we must step in and discipline other people's children. I do each day as a teacher, and I think other adults should if they see something wrong." -- Renee, a teacher in Austin, Texas

"Children need good role models and if they are not getting it from their parents, it's up to other adults to provide that. If you see bad behavior, be it on a plane, in a playground, at a store or at a sporting event, we must, as adults, make a point to stop it. If we do not, then what kind of example are we setting for our own kids?" -- Karen, a teacher in Greensboro, North Carolina

### **A Psychologist's Viewpoint**

"It's only OK to discipline another's child if you are the sole caregiver for that child at that time (for example, they're sleeping over at your house with your child) and it's a safety issue. The discipline, at this point, should be more of a redirection after the child's attention is brought to the safety risk. You should not be engaging in punishment, though. And it should go without saying that you don't ever engage in physical discipline with another's child." -- Jennifer Weaver-Breitenbecher, a psychotherapist in Rhode Island

"It is not OK to discipline other people's kids when their parents are around and it is not urgent that their behavior be corrected. In these cases, you can consider taking the parent aside and letting them know how you handle your kids in similar situations." -- [Carole Lieberman, M.D.](#), a psychiatrist and author in Beverly Hills, California

Are you looking for more advice on discipline? Check out "[No-Drama Discipline](#)" in [5 Easy Parenting Lessons](#).

How do you feel about disciplining other people's children? Leave your thoughts in the comments.

*Judy Koutsky is the former editorial director of KIWI magazine, a green parenting publication. She was also executive editor of [Parenting.com](#), AOL Parent and [BabyTalk.com](#). Follow her on [twitter](#).*

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