

What Boys Need Ages 2-4

Space + Structure

- incapable of self-regulating
- needs help setting limits
- boundaries help him feel safe
- requiring high levels of self-control sets him up for failure
- do not expect him to sit still or be quiet extended amounts of time
- "It's not okay to hit your brother, but you can hit the tree with a bat." Give him other ideas for getting his aggressive energy out.
- cannot pick up toys by himself, you must help him
- draw boundaries and redirect energy

Open Space

- boys this age are active and aggressive
- need identified stations where it's okay to run, jump, throw, spit, fart, etc.
- need to go outside every day to roam and to a playground at least once a week

Consistency

- internally unstructured and inconsistent
- attention span is 8-15 minutes
- they thrive on structure and consistency
- when addressing him, make tactile contact (get down to their level, touch his shoulder or head) and look him in the eyes.

Understanding

- make your requests short and specific
- boys get lost in lots of verbiage
- understand they are more impulsive (they produce less serotonin than girls)

General things to remember

- don't confuse him; be specific and set clear, realistic boundaries
- needs a limited selection of things to do that help him burn energy and give him a sense of success
- anticipate changes and announce transitions in the daily routine
- set a few straightforward rules that are easy to follow: we are kind, we don't hurt people or things, we don't lie, etc.
- demonstrate how you would like him to behave
- have your discipline make sense; if ball is thrown in house, ball is put up in closet for the day
- model self-control and self-regulation in your words and actions when you are frustrated or angry. Use a quiet, controlled, confident tone and make eye-to-eye contact that communicates authority
- praise him like crazy when he does something you like; experiencing success and affirmation is one of the best motivators of future behavior.