

TIP SHEET: **Interrupting**

Ages Affected: 4 years old

Interrupting is when you are in the middle of a conversation with someone and your child begins talking to you and demanding your attention. All children need lots of attention from their parents, but sometimes you just need a little time for yourself, especially when you are on the phone or talking to another adult.

Why is my child interrupting me?

Your child isn't being rude when she interrupts—she just doesn't know better. Children do not understand when interrupting is or is not appropriate. Most of the time, they simply want attention or want you to meet one of their needs.

Here are a few tips to help teach your child to stop interrupting:

- Talk to your child about interrupting. Explain how it is rude and is not good manners.
- Ignore the interruption. This is hard because this might trigger your child to speak louder, but she will soon learn that if she interrupts, she won't get the attention she is looking for.
- If you have a task or a phone call that you know will take ten minutes to complete, distract your child with something to do during that time—read a book, play with dolls, watch television. Set a timer and explain that she isn't to interrupt you (unless it is a true emergency) until the timer goes off.
- Explain why you don't like to be interrupted—as many times as it takes. Tell him that when he interrupts, it prevents you from doing something that you need to get done.



- Explain the rules. Give them two or three easy rules to follow, such as raising his hand and saying, “excuse me” when he really needs to tell you something while you are busy.
- Give rewards. Tell your child what she can earn if she follows the rules of not interrupting when you are on the phone or in the middle of a conversation.
- Talk about consequences. Decide ahead of time how you want to discipline your child. Warn your child what will happen if she keeps interrupting you and tell her that you would prefer that she doesn't do so.