



Kalamazoo CAN
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Tips for Shopping with Children

Anyone who has shopped at a grocery store or a mall with children, especially young children, knows that the experience can sometimes be highly stressful. Here are some steps that can change potential misery into potential mastery of shopping with kids.

Plan Ahead

- **Check Attitudes** - Is your child too tired or hungry to shop? If yes, postpone the trip or find a sitter.
- **Agree on Rules** - Before entering the store make your expectations clear, such as “Stay close to me” and/or “Use your quiet voice.”
- **Agree on Rewards** - Reward good behavior: Keep it simple - a choice of one snack food, stop at the park or special game at home.

At the Store

- **Make a Game of It** - Who can see the different sections of the store? Who is wearing green? Which store item names begin with certain letters?
- **Give Children Some Choices** - When possible, allow your child to make some decisions. Blue or red socks? Chocolate or vanilla pudding? Be prepared to bargain or compromise.
- **Play “20 Questions”** - Choose something and ask the child to guess what it is. The grocery list items can be used for this game.
- **Praise Your Child’s Behavior** - “I like it when you cooperate.” A hug can be reassuring and say more than words at times.

If all Else Fails

- **Remember** - Kids will be kids; they are not perfect.
- Ignore inappropriate behavior unless it becomes dangerous, distracting or annoying to others.
- Remove a child who is out of control - take the child to the restroom or out of the store. Tell the child quietly, eye to eye, that his/her behavior is unacceptable.
- Wait, saying nothing else, for the child to calm down. Then ask if he/she is ready to try again.
- You may need to restate your expectations. Go home if the child cannot calm down. If the shopping cannot wait, arrange for childcare and return alone.