

Understanding Actions and Consequences: Ages 4-5

Exploring how actions lead to certain consequences helps your child:

- Learn how his actions affect himself and others
- Anticipate consequences for common problems
- Stay calm in difficult situations and adapt if needed

Ideas to try with your child:

- Use your own self-talk to model how to think through actions and consequences, especially when you make a mistake. For example, “Oops, I made a mistake and ripped this piece of paper. I tried to fix it with glue but it fell apart again. I should try to staple it next time so it stays better.”
- Give your child choices for how to do an activity, like choosing what utensil to eat spaghetti with. If your child chooses a spoon, have him stick with it for a while, then talk about the results. Prompt him to make another choice of utensil.
- Let your child work through a difficult task. Instead of putting him on a swing, have him try different ways to get on the swing by himself.

If your child is struggling:

- Make sure that all misbehavior has a consequence. If you tell your child that you will leave the park if he throws a tantrum, make sure you are prepared to leave if he does.
- Stay close by if you see your child potentially having a conflict with a friend. Talk through what actions led to the problem and the steps to solve it together.

Going further:

- Work on anticipating consequences for common problems, like losing shoes, and work together to create a plan to avoid it.
- As you see your child’s frustration building with a difficult activity, help him to break the activity into smaller steps.

The WA State Department of Early Learning and the Richland School District believes that parents, families, and caregivers are young children’s best teachers. This resource guide, part of *Strong Foundations for School: Resource Guides for Parents of Young Children*, highlights a key developmental skill for **children ages 4-5** that parents can help improve at home.