

CAN I HAVE IT NOW?: My 4-year-old is driving me crazy. When he wants something, he keeps asking until I finally give in. How can I teach him to be more patient?

—Rita J., Imperial, NE

CHILDREN WILL often do what works best for them. To change the dynamic, tell your child that he can ask you once and you will acknowledge his request—and then he must wait until you're ready. Only when he's quiet and calm will you get him what he wants.

It might help to teach him the sign language sign for WAIT (palm up, fingers wiggling) so that you won't have to raise your voice. You may need to use it repeatedly at first, but eventually you can expect him to respond appropriately the first time he sees it.

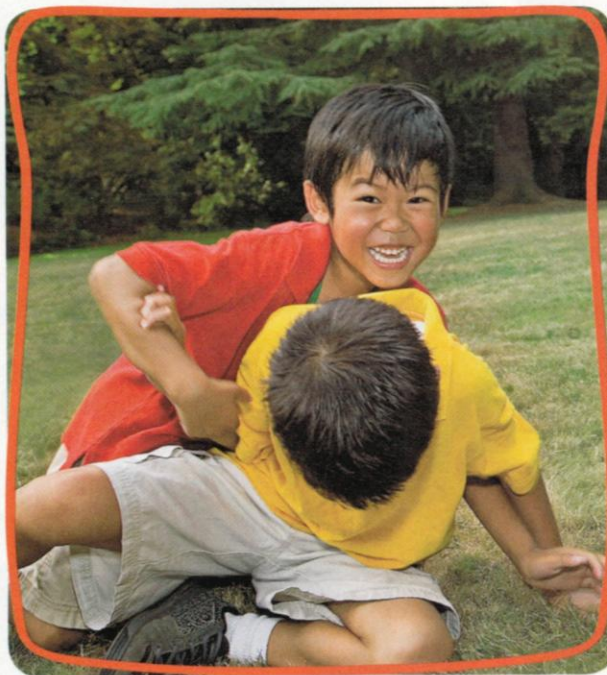
Begin by asking him to wait a short time, and reward him by responding quickly. Start with things he *really* wants. Gradually lengthen his waiting time and expand it beyond the things he's dying for. Be specific about how long he needs to wait ("I hear that you want more cereal. I'll get it when I'm done writing this e-mail"), and keep your word.

STAY IN BED: Lately my 6-year-old keeps calling me back at bedtime with one non-sense problem after another. How can I encourage more self-reliance at night?

—Sarah P., Nampa, ID

ASK P&C

Developmental psychology expert Michelle Anthony answers your questions about your child's social, emotional, and behavioral development at home and in school. **THIS MONTH:** Whiny impatience, resistance at bedtime, and talking about puberty



IT'S NATURAL for children to seek extra comfort at bedtime, but it's equally important to help them learn to put themselves to sleep. To meet both needs: **Give her some control.** As long as she's in bed, let her decide when and how she falls asleep—reading books, playing quietly, etc. **Make her a problem-solver.** Let her know what you expect and that you know she can do it. Make sure she has what she needs, and then begin using the mantra, "Now you need to

solve your own . . ."—have her fill in "problem!" Let her know that she can cry if she wants to, but she still has to go to bed. Then, leave. If she balks, repeat the mantra from outside her room.

While it may take both of you a few days to get used to the new system, she'll soon redirect her "badgering" energy toward reading or quiet play as she drifts off.

MICHELLE ANTHONY, M.A., Ph.D., is co-author of *Little Girls Can Be Mean: Four Steps to Bully-Proof Girls in the Early Grades*. She is an expert in developmental psychology, a mother to three young children, and a certified K-3 teacher.

GROWING UP: My 9-year-old daughter is sprouting underarm hair! I knew the day would come when we'd have to have "the talk," but I didn't think it would come so soon. Do I broach the subject now or wait a few months?

—Sarah K., Washington, DC

YOUR DAUGHTER is likely confused and feeling alone with the sudden changes in her body. So it's smart to let her know that what's happening is completely normal, and you are ready to talk with her about it when she's up for it.

Providing tools and guidance about puberty appropriate for your daughter's age will help break the ice. Try a book, for instance. A good one for a late tween is *Ready, Set, Grow!: A What's Happening to My Body? Book for Younger Girls* by Lynda Madaras. Read it together and share stories from your own past to help her understand that puberty is a part of life.

Then give her the power to find out more. She might want to chat with her pediatrician, speak with a health teacher at school, or read other books about puberty on her own. **P&C**



Have a question you'd like P&C to answer? E-mail it to AskPC@scholastic.com.