

Crib Jumpers

Many little ones like to climb out of their cribs when no one is looking. It's a brave feat that tells Mom and Dad that their little one is growing up! It can also be very frustrating for parents and dangerous to the child. But teaching a child to stay where he's put is a very teachable skill. Bribes, surveillance cameras and crib netting are totally unnecessary. With a bit of training and reinforcement with the rod, a one year old or younger can learn to stay in his crib when he's put there. Properly trained, he can stay quietly there until Mom or Dad comes for him. Yes, it is possible!

The act of climbing is not naughty. Being a crib-jumper when the parent says no, is naughty. If the child is old enough to climb out, he's old enough to understand about staying in. If he's not yet used to obeying his parents, this is yet another excellent opportunity to teach him. Here's how to do it:

Calmly tell your child that he may not climb out of the crib.

Tell him that if he climbs out, he will get a spank with the rod.

If you don't think he quite understands your words, walk him through a pretend escape, sternly show him with your facial expression and voice that climbing out is not allowed, and give him a pretend swat with the rod. He should already be familiar with the sting of the rod from other daily training situations, so he'll know what you're meaning here.

Tell him to stay in the crib until he naps and you come to get him.

Then put him down for his nap. Any fussing gets a swat with the rod too. I simply say, "You may not fuss." Children can learn to take their naps without complaint.

He will test the new rule so be ready for it. It's best to catch him in the act of starting to climb out. Tell him again he may not climb out. Give him a swat with the rod that he can feel and put him back down in his crib. If he cries too much, tell him to stop or he'll get another spank. Children can learn to cry quietly, and be done with it quickly.

Repeat the above steps as often as necessary.

Some children will learn the new expectation immediately and will only need occasional reminders with the rod. Others will test it furiously for days, to see how serious the parent is and who is really in charge. You must win this little battle. Every child needs to know that Mom and Dad are in charge. Even though he tests their expectations, he wants to know that his parents will hold him to it. There is safety in knowing the parents are in charge. He will rest more comfortably when this battle is decided. When he does stay in his crib for his nap, comment on it later and give him some praise. "Good job staying in your crib! Mommy's very pleased!" Then go about your business.

If naptime is a particularly confrontational time in your child's day, and he is just getting used to your use of the rod, naptimes will get easier as you use the rod for other simpler training times during the day. Typically, little ones who refuse to stay in bed are not being required to obey at other times of the day either. The sooner they learn to obey quickly and quietly the first time you say something, the sooner the child will learn to stay in his crib, or anywhere he's put (car seat, grocery cart, church pew). A well trained child is a much safer and happier child.