

Is it ok to smack my child? (England only)

Smacking is a form of discipline using the flat of a hand to hit/slap a child as a means of teaching the child that their behaviour is unacceptable. There are many debates about whether smacking is an acceptable form of discipline although it is widely recognised and advised that hurting children in any form is not the best way to teach them right from wrong.



WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

The law currently states that it is illegal for a parent or guardian to use anything harsher than reasonable chastisement (mild forms of physical punishment) to discipline their child. Reasonable chastisement means that the punishment is mild, relevant to the behaviour and not sustained.

IS IT ABUSE?

It is a chargeable offence (Actual Bodily Harm) if a smack is hard enough to cause bruising, grazes, scratches, minor swellings, cuts or other marks (e.g red skin). It is also an offence to use an object of any description.

WHAT CAN I DO INSTEAD OF SMACKING?

Smacking does not teach your child how you want them to behave. Instead, it encourages them to believe that hitting someone is acceptable and may lead them to show violent behaviour towards others. Here are some things you can do to avoid smacking your child.

- Show love and warmth.
- Lead by example. Children learn from others. Act as a positive role model for your child. If you yell, scream or become physically violent towards others then your child will learn to believe that this is an appropriate way to deal with conflict.
- Praise good behaviour at every opportunity to encourage more of it.
- Reward good behaviour.
- Let your child know that it is their behaviour that you don't like, not them.
- Use distraction methods to stop the unacceptable behavior from continuing.
- Ignore low-level unacceptable behaviour.

SOMETIMES A PUNISHMENT IS NECESSARY. WHAT CAN I DO?

- Use Time Out
- Remove privileges such as sweets, toys, money, games, TV
- Curfew
- Increase chores

Talk to someone in school if you need support to manage your child's behaviour.

STAY CALM!