

## Time Out Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended to help teachers implement **time out** procedures appropriately and effectively. These guidelines are not a comprehensive or a complete explanation of how to use **time out** in a given setting. Those who are attempting to implement **time out** procedures for the first time should have supervision and consultation by professionals with expertise in behavioral intervention procedures, and who have knowledge of the research literature regarding **time out**.

**Time out** involves removing a student from all sources of **positive reinforcement** as a **consequence** of a specified undesired behavior. **Time out** is only one option along a continuum of interventions supporting behavior change. Most teachers think of **time out** as only involving placing the student in an isolated setting (a time out area) for a period of time. Actually, **time out** may be implemented on several alternative levels, ranging from the student being ignored and not included by others (non-exclusionary time out) to removing the student to a separate area (isolation).

Locking a student in a separate space with a passive locking mechanism or device is the legal definition of “Seclusion” - or what is often called “Seclusionary Time out” - and can only be done in Georgia with the express order of a Licensed Psychologist or a Physician for each use. **This makes its use in schools completely inappropriate.**

**Time out** is a relatively aversive and intrusive behavior reduction procedure, because it involves the removal of **reinforcement** and it interrupts the pupil's instructional program. However, its use may be required when the student's behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others. Behavior problems will not be positively affected by use of **time out** unless it is used in the context of an appropriate program.

- **Types of Time Out:**
  - **Non-Exclusionary Time Out:**
    - **Removes interaction with other people for a specified period of time**
    - **Allows the student to remain in the setting with the others who are ignoring the student**
    - **Allows the student to continue to engage in appropriate behaviors within the original setting**
    - **Special Requirements:**
      - **Minimum duration should not exceed 15 minutes**

- **Social reinforcement (attention) provided after:**
  - **time limit met**
  - **absence of inappropriate behavior(s)**
  - **appropriate behavior exhibited**
- **Specify maximum duration ahead of time**
  - **Recommend max = 60 minutes**
  - **decrease release criteria if 45 minutes have elapsed to avoid forced release at 60 minutes even if inappropriate**
- **Monitor student to ensure appropriate response to any escalation of behavior(s) (i.e., aggression, destruction of property, etc.)**
- **Record entry time, release time, and reason for use**
- **Time Out by Exclusion:**
  - **Removal of the student from immediate interaction within the same environment**
    - **This allows the student to observe from a distance what is occurring**
    - **Allows potential learning from observing the other students modeling appropriate behavior(s)**
  - **Special Requirements:**
    - **Minimum duration should not exceed 15 minutes**
    - **Return to original place within environment and Social reinforcement (attention) provided after:**
      - **time limit met**
      - **absence of inappropriate behavior(s)**
      - **appropriate behavior exhibited**
    - **Specify maximum duration ahead of time**
      - **Recommend max = 60 minutes**
      - **decrease release criteria if 45 minutes have elapsed to avoid forced release at 60 minutes even if inappropriate**
    - **Monitor student to ensure appropriate response to any escalation of behavior(s) (i.e., aggression, destruction of property, etc.)**

- **Record entry time, release time, and reason for use**
- **If physical guidance is required to relocate student to time out, this process must be specifically addressed in the Behavior Intervention Plan and appropriate training provided to all staff who might participate**
- **Time Out by Isolation:**
  - **This is the form of time out that teachers often assume is the only form - removal from the location to another location that is isolated - the time out room**
    - **Time out room should be**
      - **well ventilated**
      - **lighted**
      - **low-stimulation**
      - **safe**
      - **quiet**
    - **Transportation to time out is a consideration**
  - **Special Requirements:**
    - **Data on the use of this form of time out must be reviewed by appropriately qualified non-classroom staff at least monthly to ensure objective evaluation of its effectiveness**
    - **The room must be:**
      - **tall enough for the student to stand erect**
      - **large enough for the student lie on the floor without touching any walls**
      - **be heated and cooled sufficiently**
      - **lighted**
      - **have a means of observing the students well-being while in the room**
      - **must *not* have a passive locking mechanism of be barred in such a way that the student can not escape if another person is not actively engaged in barring the entrance**
    - **Staff must keep detailed records of the behaviors that promoted the use of the time out room, including:**
      - **Target behaviors exhibited**

- **alternatives attempted prior to the use of the time out room**
- **notations on behavior of student while in the time out room (at least ever 5 minutes)**
- **Minimum duration should not exceed 15 minutes**
- **Return to original environment and Social reinforcement (attention) provided after:**
  - **time limit met**
  - **absence of inappropriate behavior(s)**
  - **appropriate behavior exhibited**
- **Specify maximum duration ahead of time**
  - **Recommend max = 60 minutes**
  - **decrease release criteria if 45 minutes have elapsed to avoid forced release at 60 minutes even if inappropriate**
- **Monitor student to ensure appropriate response to any escalation of behavior(s) (i.e., aggression, destruction of property, etc.)**
- **If physical guidance is required to relocate student to time out, this process must be specifically addressed in the Behavior Intervention Plan and appropriate training provided to all staff who might participate**

## General Time out Procedures

You should establish a set of procedures for using **time out** in your classroom including:

1. A set of classroom rules and consequences for their infraction.
2. A hierarchy of planned consequences for behavior, with time out as one of several alternatives for misbehavior.
3. A range of time out procedures that are suited to your classroom, your pupils, and your personal classroom management plan.
4. A set of personal guidelines for deciding when to use time out and what level of time out to employ.
5. Written procedures for applying time out, including:
  - a. A warning signal, if appropriate.
  - b. What you say to pupils when giving them a time out.
  - c. Decision rules regarding which level of time out to impose, and when to go from one level to another.
  - d. Due process procedures for obtaining administrative and parental consent to use time out.
  - e. Specification of the duration of each time out, how duration is monitored, and decision rules for varying the duration of time out.
  - f. Specification of desired student behavior in time out.
  - g. Procedures for releasing pupils from time out.
  - h. A data sheet for recording instances of time out.
  - i. Decision rules for evaluating the effectiveness of time out with individual students.
- F) Alternative interventions when it is concluded that time out is not effective in a given instance, or in general.
- G) Procedures for teaching students to take time outs appropriately.
- H) A professional with expertise in behavioral interventions should supervise your application of these procedures across three periodic classroom observations.

## Prior to Implementing Time out: How should time out be implemented?

1. Conduct a functional assessment to identify the function of the target (undesired) behavior.
  - a. Behavior has two functions:
    1. to obtains something the student wants (e.g., teacher or peer attention),
    2. or to escape or avoid something he doesn't want (e.g., undesired task)
  - b. If time out fulfills either of these functions, it will not have the desired effect on behavior:
    1. if the student is able to escape an undesired academic activity by going to time out, behavior resulting in time out will likely increase as a result of using time out
    2. Time out also will not be effective if it provides an opportunity to engage in behavior that is self-reinforcing (e.g., self-stimulation).
  - c. In addition to a time out contingency, identify and support desired replacement behavior.
2. Specify in advance the behaviors which will result in time out.
3. Specify exit criteria from time out:
  - a. Maximum duration limit is fine but should also include exit criteria
  - b. Consider what behaviors you do not want to see in time out and then specify a target duration of their absence for release from time out:
    1. If the student is quiet, seated, and physically calm for X minutes they will be released from time out, or
    2. If after X minutes the student is quiet, seated, and physically calm for X minutes they will be released from time out
4. Consider use of less intrusive behavior reduction procedures first (i.e., differential reinforcement, extinction, response cost).
  - a. These less intrusive procedures should have been established as ineffective before time out is used.
  - b. These procedures can be used in tandem with time out.

5. Develop a written statement of how time out is to be implemented.
6. If time out by isolation is used, the following requirements should be met:
  - a. The time out room should be at least 6' x 6' or larger and based upon the age and size of the student.
  - b. The room ***must*** be properly lighted and ventilated.
  - c. The room should be free of objects and fixtures with which the student could harm himself.
  - d. A staff person should be able to see and hear the student in time out at all times.
  - e. The area should never be locked or able to be passively locked.
  - f. Use of a fully enclosed area limits staff observation and access to student.
  - g. At no time shall a student be placed in a locked area alone.
7. Keep written records of each occasion when time out is used including:
  - a. Student's name
  - b. Behavior resulting in time out
  - c. Beginning and end time for time out
  - d. The location of time out (non-exclusionary, exclusionary, isolation)
  - e. The student's behavior in time out
8. Evaluate procedures if time out duration exceeds 15 minutes.
9. Based on the data kept on targeted behaviors evaluate the effectiveness of the time out.

## What factors are involved in using time out?

1. A warning signal indicating that time out is imminent if the pupil doesn't alter his/her behavior.
2. A brief verbalized explanation of why the student is being given a time out if the student did not alter behavior after warning signal was given.
3. Provide instruction to the student in taking time out.
4. The location in which time out is taken:
  - a. Non-Exclusionary - student remains at his or her current work area, but materials and social attention are removed.
  - b. Exclusionary - student remains in classroom area, but is removed from the area of group activity.
  - c. Isolation - student is removed to a time out area.
5. The duration of time out:
  - a. Brief (e.g., 1-5 minutes) time outs are as effective as longer time outs if the student hasn't been exposed to long time outs first.
  - b. Durations longer than 30 minutes should not be employed.
  - c. A nonverbal signal indicating the beginning and end of time out may be used if students have been taught to respond to it.
6. Requirements for release from time out:
  - a. Completion of the specified duration of time out.
  - b. Appropriate behavior during time out.
  - c. End of maximum duration of time out (implement alternate intervention if time out has not been effective at this point).

## How is time out be abused?

1. Time out is overused due to lack of appropriate, proactive, instructional program.
2. The regular environment (Classroom or instructional setting) is not sufficiently reinforcing.
3. The regular environment can be behaviorally enriched by:
  - a. Giving four times as much positive reinforcement as punishment.
  - b. Having a systematic behavior support plan for teaching and reinforcing a replacement behavior that serves the same function as the undesired behavior.
4. Time out is applied inappropriately:
  - a. Time out is the only, or nearly the only, behavior reduction procedure used.
  - b. Time out is applied too late---when the student is out of control.
  - c. Teacher escalates student behavior by lecturing student when in time out, following time out, or prior to time out.
5. The teacher does not consistently enforce time out contingencies.
  - a. Student is able to avoid time out by arguing or refusing to take time out.
  - b. Teacher is unable to direct physically mature students to utilize time out if they refuse (Consider age appropriateness).
  - c. Teacher is inconsistent in following through with time out after warning (i.e., Using time out after three (3) warnings, five (5) warnings, etc.)
  - d. Ways to teach appropriate use of time out to students:
    1. Use systematic teaching procedures (e.g., Model, role play/practice, and feedback):
    2. Hold time out training sessions at other occasions than when time out is needed:
    3. reinforce successive approximations.
  - e. If the teacher is unable or unwilling to enforce time out, he/she should simply not use it or only threatens to use time out.
6. The effectiveness of time out is not evaluated