

WORST-CASE SCENARIO®

HOW TO DEAL WITH A SMART ALECK

1 Ignore.

Children with easy-going temperaments will try out smart-aleck behavior once or twice and drop it if it doesn't get a response.

2 Alert your child to the offensive behavior.

If your child continues to display an impertinent attitude, point out specific information about his actions that are unacceptable. Raise a yellow flag, kept in your back pocket (the way a referee calls a foul), whenever your child says something obnoxious. Then give him a time-out.

3 Remove privileges.

Reduce access to favorite activities, such as watching television or playing outside, in accordance with the severity and frequency of the insolence. Clearly state the reason for the consequence. Place favorite toys or video games in a "toy prison," from which they can be paroled for the child's good behavior.

4 Do not sass back.

It will be tempting to respond in kind to offensive behavior; it is likely that you'd win a contest of wits, but you run the risk of encouraging your child to come up with better lines the next time.

5 **Encourage your budding comedian.**

Try to hone your child's wit into a marketable skill. Watch movies and listen to recordings featuring famous sarcastic comedians and work on his act. Beware that this could lead to the child becoming a "dirty talker," and, if the act succeeds, completely unmanageable.

Be Aware

Children learn to behave and speak by modeling what they observe at home. Do not use any language in front of the child that you would not want him repeating. Eliminate sarcasm, eye rolling, verbal mimicry, irony, and back talk from your own speech.

