

# Respond safely to physical aggression

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Respond safely to challenging situations'  
from the Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

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**Includes:**

- Managing physical aggression
- Acceptable physical contact
- Useful resources

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From

Guide: [Behaviour and learning](#)

Strategy: [Respond safely to challenging situations](#)

Suggestion: [Respond safely to physical aggression](#)

Date

19 April 2024

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/respond-safely-to-physical-aggression](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/behaviour-and-learning/respond-safely-to-physical-aggression)

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## Managing physical aggression

Safety comes first.

The goal is to defuse the situation.

Assist rather than punish the student.

Punishing can escalate a situation.

- ✓ Stay calm, protect other children, set limits, and seek help.
- ✓ Remove the student to another space or another room or remove others from the area. Ask for the student's cooperation to do this. Say, for example, "Come to the library corner until things have settled".
- ✓ If there is a pattern to aggression, take preliminary actions such as students taking their shoes off inside if the student kicks or having their fingernails cut short if they scratch.
- ✓ Use approaches that aim to teach social skills and reinforce desired behaviours, combined with planned incentives.
- ✓ If the student has a safety plan or an individual behaviour plan, follow the processes outlined in this plan.

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## Acceptable physical contact

Staff may need to physically support students.

For advice and examples of what is acceptable, see the [Ministry of Education guidelines on minimising physical restraint](#) (PDF, 10MB).

Three principles help determine what physical contact is acceptable:

1. The ākonga is willing to be touched.
2. It is for the benefit of ākonga.
3. It is limited to appropriate areas of the body, generally shoulders, arms, hands and upper back, unless it is a prescribed technique for a specific purpose.

Situations involving acceptable physical contact to support students happen in schools every day to:

- develop skills
- provide emotional support
- aid and assist
- support positioning and posture
- support communication.

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## Useful resources



### Minimising the use of physical restraint in New Zealand schools and kura

New rules and guidelines on understanding ākonga distress and minimising the use of physical restraint in schools came into force on 7 February 2023. These supersede the 2017 rules and guidelines.

[Visit website](#)



### Positive Behaviour for Learning information sheet: Anticipating and responding to child stress

Read time: 5 min

Information on indicators of child stress and tips for nurturing positive behaviours.

Publisher: Positive Behaviour for Learning

[Visit website](#)



### Physical restraint

Read time: 28 min

Information for parents on physical restraint in schools and kura.

[Visit website](#)

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