

# 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

20 September 2021

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.

The following situations involving physical contact to support students happen in schools every day:

- Temporary physical contact, such as an open hand on the arm, back or shoulders to remove a student from a situation to a safer place.
- Supporting a student to move them to another location, or help them to get in a vehicle or use the stairs.
- The practice of harness restraint, when keeping a student and others safe in a moving vehicle, or when recommended by a physiotherapist or occupational therapist for safety or body positioning.
- Younger students, especially in their first year of school, sometimes need additional help. For example, you may “shepherd” a group of younger students from one place to another.
- Staff may hold the hand of a young student who is happy to have their hand held for a short time.
- Staff may pick a student up to comfort them.
- Assisting a student with toileting, including changing a nappy.

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## Useful resources



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

Read time: 5 min

Publisher: Positive Behaviour for Learning

[Download](#) PDF



Guidelines for registered schools in New Zealand on the use of physical restraint

Read time: 28 min

Publisher: Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

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