



## Parent Questions:

# When a Child Refuses to Leave When It's Time To Go

### Question:

I saw a father get into a power struggle with his 3 year old son when he went to pick his son up from daycare. The father said it was time to go and the boy yelled, "No". The father asked again and the child yelled, "No" again. What are some ways to handle this kind of situation?

### Michael's Response:

1. If the kid typically does this, I would tend to ask (right when he came in) "Hey good to see you. Do you want to leave now or in 2 minutes?". This shares control, is respectful, and then the kids is more likely to assent to leaving because he chose when.
2. If you have to leave ASAP, I would lean over and whisper (helps eliminate the audience effect) "Would you like to walk on your own, or shall I carry you?" This shares control as the kid gets to decide, is respectful giving him a choice in the matter and toddler to preschool level kids will often go for it since they don't like being picked up in a discipline situation since it diminishes their sense of control.
3. If the kid often does this and you've got to leave ASAP, another alternative is to use your instant empathetic statement, for instance, "Bummer" and just pick him up. The advantage of this is that the kid learns that you are going to be *quietly effective* and just act. It capitalizes on the *unexpected* and the kid learns pretty quickly that he has more control if he just goes along.

Remember that it is fine for the child to walk out and *protest* at the same time. If he screams and is walking out the door as he does so, I would just say "Thanks" to him and turn around and wink or smile at whoever is watching. That leaves me, and possibly them, with the feeling that I am choosing my battles and that letting the child protest is intentional.