



Stop & Go Door Signs for Adults

Stop & Go Door Signs for Adults encourage assertiveness, boundaries and cooperation when working from home.

Learning to respect others' boundaries is important for peace and productivity when one or more adults are working from home.

The "STOP and GO" visuals included here will help children (and other adults) respect your boundaries. To be effective, the visuals must be prefaced with clear, honest conversation and ample opportunities for togetherness. If all adults in the home are telecommuting, alternate schedules as much as possible so someone is available to be the "GO" person at all times.

Ideally, you will be able to work from a separate room, whether it's a home office or your bedroom. Punch holes and hang the appropriate sign from the door handle or use painter's tape to hold it in place. If you work in a common space, tape the sign to the back of your laptop and know you are more likely to be interrupted. Your first response when interrupted is to wordlessly point to the stop sign. If the child persists, breathe deeply to calm yourself before reminding your child the meaning of the stop sign, and telling her what to do next if you are unable to intervene (find another adult, wait 5 more minutes, etc.). It may also be helpful to break up your workday so you are only unavailable for an hour or two at a time, and check in and connect with family members in between.

Boundary-setting and visuals are unlikely to be successful unless you establish and maintain a sense of safety and connection. Particularly during times of stress, it is important to honor your child's need for additional connection. Signs that a child needs more connection include decreased frustration tolerance, clinging, increased fits and tantrums, forgetting how to do basic tasks, bed wetting, baby talk and other regressive behaviors.

If you begin to encounter these behaviors (especially right before or after working), set aside extra time to snuggle, connect, practice active calming, read and rough house together.

If you are working from home, resist the temptation to sneak off when no one's looking. Instead, cultivate safety, connection and predictability by developing a ritual you will do every time you leave for and return from work. The leaving ritual can be as simple as pretending to chomp on your child as you say, "Mommy's going to work! See you later alligator," and they respond, "After a while crocodile." The returning ritual can be a silly game like "Where'd my baby go? Is she in here (look around)? What about in here (keep looking, pretending not to see her)? Oh, there she is (scoop her up in a big hug)!" The I Love You Rituals book provides dozens of rituals that fit the bill.

The following conversation starter encourages cooperation and teaches children how to use the signs to set boundaries. You will want to have this conversation several times, with frequent reminders as you leave for work.

CONVERSATION STARTER

"I'm going to be working from home while you are also home. Working helps me to provide food, a house and fun experiences for our family. You are important to me and I'm going to make sure you have everything you need, even while I'm working. Most of the time, I'm going to be available to you. Sometimes you will see a red stop sign. This means I am doing something that is difficult for me to stop. When you see the red sign, you have a choice. You can seek out ___(other adult)___ or you can ___(seek out older siblings or another solution)___. Does that make sense? Do you have any questions? Now, tell me what you can do if you see the red stop sign."

If there is not going to be another adult present, you will need to discuss when it's okay to interrupt a stop sign using specific language and examples. "If it's an emergency" isn't specific. From a 5-year-old's perspective, wanting a popsicle might feel like an emergency! Role play situations they're likely to encounter, including wanting a snack, bumping their head, wanting to play out front, spilling their drink, skinning their knee, starting a movie, someone at the door, a sibling doing something hurtful, etc.



