10 Scripts for Talking to Teens Without a Blow-Up

Clear boundaries. Less escalation. More useful conversations.

No script guarantees a calm response. Use a steady voice, keep it brief, and leave room to listen.

01 When the phone has their full attention

Instead of: “You’re always on your phone.”

> **“I need your attention for a few minutes. Let’s both put our phones down.”**

02 When they challenge the rule

Instead of: “Because I said so.”

> **“Here’s why the rule matters. I’ll hear your concerns, and I still expect you to follow it while we talk about whether it needs to change.”**

03 When emotions are running high

Instead of: “Calm down!”

> **“You’re upset, and this is getting heated. Let’s take ten minutes, then come back and talk.”**

04 When you feel unheard

Instead of: “You never listen.”

> **“Let me finish this thought, then I’ll hear your side without interrupting.”**

05 When a task is going nowhere

Instead of: “Why can’t you just…?”

> **“What part is getting in your way? Let’s start there.”**

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Keep the limit. Lower the heat.

06 When schoolwork is slipping

Instead of: “You don’t care about school.”

> **“School matters, and something isn’t working. What’s getting in the way? Let’s figure out the first step.”**

07 When the reaction surprises you

Instead of: “Stop being so dramatic.”

> **“I can see this matters to you. Help me understand what’s upsetting you.”**

08 When there needs to be a consequence

Instead of: “You’re grounded!”

> **“Here’s the rule that was broken and the consequence. Let’s talk about what needs to happen next.”**

09 When you need follow-through

Instead of: “Do what I say.”

> **“Here’s what needs to happen, and when. What do you need to get started?”**

10 When you’re both frustrated

Instead of: “You’re impossible.”

> **“This is hard, but we’re still a team. Let’s work out the next step.”**

Keep consequences reasonable, clear, and connected to the behavior when possible. When you pause a conversation, name when you’ll return and follow through. Understanding a feeling does not require changing every limit.

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