



CALM Framework Scenario Cards

Ready-to-Use Scripts for 12 Common Situations — Print-ready 5"×7" cards, 4 per page (3 pages). Each card: front = scenario + script, back = tips + CALM breakdown. Designed for parents and caregivers with a clean, flash-card aesthetic and clear print guidelines (bleed, cut lines, safe zone).

 PRINT-READY

 LAMINATE-FRIENDLY

300 DPI • CMYK

Card Set — Page 1 (Morning)



BREAKFAST REFUSAL

FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child refuses to eat breakfast or throws food on the floor.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "You have two options: cereal or toast. Which one?"

Child: "I don't want anything!"

Parent: "I see you're frustrated. Let's breathe together, then you can choose. I'll help pour or butter, whichever you pick."

WATCH FOR: →

Breathing slows, throwing stops, eye contact returns

Footer: Card #1 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Run a quick bio-scan first—hunger and sleep matter
- Keep both options visible during the choice
- Don't add a third option if they refuse both

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Co-regulate with breathing before choice

A: Two options only—clear, bounded autonomy

L: Breakfast is non-negotiable; choice is within that

M: Support their choice; don't take over the task

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: Child may be depleted—offer water, wait 5 minutes, try again.

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Print on 110lb cardstock for durability | Laminate for repeated use



SHOE BATTLES

FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child refuses to put on shoes when it's time to leave.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "Red shoes or blue shoes? You pick."

[Pause. Let them choose.]

Parent: "Good choice. You put them on yourself. I'm here if you need help."

WATCH FOR: → Choice made within 10 seconds; child begins task independently

Footer: Card #2 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Pre-select both options—ensure they fit
- If shoes on wrong feet, let them discover it
- Build in 3 extra minutes for independence practice

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Pause instead of rushing—contain your time pressure

A: Choice between two acceptable options

L: Shoes are required to go outside—firm boundary

M: You're backup only; they practice putting them on

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: Check for depletion (hungry, tired); address that first.

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CAR SEAT RESISTANCE

FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child refuses to get into car seat and physically resists.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "You decide which toy comes for the ride. I'll help buckle you in. Which one?"

[Child selects toy]

Parent: "Perfect. Hold it while I buckle. You picked a good one."

WATCH FOR: →

Negotiation replaces resistance; focus shifts to toy

Footer: Card #3 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Keep 2–3 car toys in rotation—not all toys
- Let them hold a toy during buckle (distraction)
- Acknowledge: "I know you wanted to keep playing"

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Calm acknowledgment of their wish to stay

A: They choose which toy—real decision power

L: Car seat is mandatory for safety—firm boundary

M: Guide the process; they make the choice

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: Major meltdown = depletion. Sit, offer water, then try again with toy choice.

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Card Set — Page 2 (Mealtime)



MEALTIME PICKINESS

FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child refuses to eat dinner, says they don't like it.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "You don't have to eat everything. Try two bites of this, or two bites of that. Your choice."

Child: "I don't like it!"

Parent: "That's okay. Which two bites will you try first?"

WATCH FOR: → Child tries at least one bite; engagement begins

Footer: Card #4 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Don't force eating—avoid power struggles
- "Two bites" is reasonable, not overwhelming
- Celebrate trying, not finishing

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Accept their feeling without forcing

A: Choice between two foods, not forced consumption

L: Family eats together—boundary is presence, not amount

M: Support exploration; avoid pressure

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: If both refused, say "Okay, dinner is available for 20 more minutes" and continue calmly.

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LEAVING THE TABLE

FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child gets up from the table repeatedly during mealtime.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "You can sit and eat, or be done with dinner. Which do you choose?"

Child: [Gets up again]

Parent: "I see you chose to be done. Your plate will be here if you change your mind in 5 minutes."

WATCH FOR: → Child understands consequence, returns to seat or accepts end

Footer: Card #5 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- State choice clearly once, then follow through
- Don't chase them with food
- Natural consequence: no snacks later if meal refused

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: State calmly without anger

A: Clear choice: stay or be done

L: Mealtime has structure—consistent boundary

M: They decide and experience the result

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: If they return hungry later, offer the original meal (not a new snack) to reinforce consistency.

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FOOD THROWING

FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child throws food on the floor during meal.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "Food stays on the table or in your mouth. If you throw again, meal is over. Do you understand?"

[If throws again]

Parent: "I see you're done eating." [Remove plate calmly]

WATCH FOR: → Throwing stops, or child accepts consequence calmly

Footer: Card #6 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- One warning, then consequence—be consistent
- Don't lecture; remove the plate calmly
- If they say "I'm hungry" later, offer same food

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Calm removal, no big reaction

A: Clear expectation stated once

L: Throwing = meal ends; predictable consequence

M: They learn cause-effect through experience

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: If under 18 months, throwing may be sensory—offer sensory play outside meals.

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Card Set — Page 3 (Bedtime)



BEDTIME STALLING



FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child asks for "one more" story, water, bathroom repeatedly.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "You can have one more story, or one more song. Not both. Which do you choose?"

[Child chooses]

Parent: "Good choice. After this, it's sleep time. I love you."

WATCH FOR: → Child makes choice and accepts finality

Footer: Card #7 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Offer choice before they start the "one more" requests
- Follow through—no renegotiation after choice
- Keep bedtime routine predictable and same order nightly

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Calm boundary setting, no frustration

A: One more thing—their choice which

L: Bedtime routine ends predictably

M: Support choice, then firm boundary

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: If stalling continues, say "I'll check on you in 5 minutes" and do so calmly.

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PAJAMA REFUSAL



FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child refuses to put on pajamas at bedtime.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "Dinosaur pajamas or rocket pajamas? You pick."

Child: "I want to sleep in my clothes!"

Parent: "We wear pajamas at night. Which ones? I'll help with the buttons if you need."

WATCH FOR: → Choice made; cooperation with changing begins

Footer: Card #8 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Pre-select two options they like
- If they refuse both, offer "or I can choose for you"
- Make changing part of routine before preferred activity

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: State boundary without anger

A: Choice within requirement

L: Pajamas are non-negotiable for sleep

M: Offer help; let them do what they can

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: If total refusal, "Okay, no story until pajamas are on." Natural consequence.

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BEDTIME ESCAPE



FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child repeatedly gets out of bed after being tucked in.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "It's sleep time. You can stay in bed with the door open a crack, or I close it fully. Your choice."

[If gets out again]

Parent: "I see you chose door closed." [Close calmly, no anger]

WATCH FOR: → Child stays in bed; understands consequence

Footer: Card #9 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Follow through immediately and consistently
- Check on them in 5 minutes if door closed
- Don't engage in conversation when returning them to bed

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Calm enforcement, not punishment

A: Clear choice with outcomes

L: Bedtime = staying in bed; predictable rule

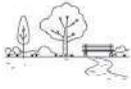
M: They learn through consistent consequence

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: Repeat calmly; consistency over 3–5 nights helps form the habit.

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Card Set — Page 4 (Transitions)



LEAVING THE PARK



FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child refuses to leave park/playground when it's time.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "5 more minutes, then we leave. Do you want to go down the slide one more time, or swing?"

[After 5 minutes]

Parent: "Time's up. Do you want to walk to the car, or should I carry you?"

WATCH FOR: → Child makes choice; transitions with less resistance

Footer: Card #10 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Give a 5-minute then 2-minute warning
- Follow through even if upset
- Offer choice in HOW to leave, not WHETHER

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Acknowledge difficulty of transition

A: Choice in last activity and departure method

L: Leaving time is firm and predictable

M: Maintain some control for them in the moment

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: For full meltdown, carry calmly; validate in the car and plan return.

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STORE TANTRUMS



FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Child has a meltdown in store, demanding an item.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "We're not buying that today. You can help me find the apples, or push the cart. Which do you want to do?"

Child: [Continues crying]

Parent: "I see you're upset. We can sit here until you're ready, or finish shopping. You choose."

WATCH FOR: → Meltdown decreases; engagement with alternative choice

Footer: Card #11 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Don't negotiate during meltdown
- Offer a small job (finding apples) as redirection
- If it continues, calmly leave the store if possible

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Be calm—you're the anchor

A: Redirect to a helpful choice, not the demanded item

L: "Not buying" is firm; keep boundaries

M: Give them a role to restore contribution

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: Major meltdown often signals depletion. Exit, address needs, try again another day.

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SIBLING TOY CONFLICT



FRONT — THE

SITUATION: Two children fighting over the same toy.

THE SCRIPT:

Parent: "I see you both want the truck. You can take turns—5 minutes each—or I put it away until you agree. What do you choose?"

[If fighting continues]

Parent: "I see you chose for me to put it away."

[Remove calmly]

WATCH FOR: → Children negotiate turn-taking or accept toy removal

Footer: Card #12 • CALM Framework

BACK — PRO TIPS:

- Use a timer—visual helps young kids
- Facilitate their solution; don't solve it for them
- Praise any attempt at negotiation

CALM BREAKDOWN:

C: Stay calm; don't escalate

A: They choose: cooperate or lose access

L: Fighting = toy goes away; consistent rule

M: Guide negotiation; don't take over

WHEN IT DOESN'T

WORK: If both are depleted, separate them, address needs, and reintroduce the toy later.

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Print & Production Notes

Page Layout

4 cards per letter page (2×2 grid). Each card: 5"×7" portrait with 0.125" bleed and 0.25" safe margin. Include cut lines (light gray dashed) between cards and registration marks on outer edges. Front and back panels aligned for duplex printing.

Visual Elements

- Icons: 32×32px simple line icons placed top-left of header bar
- Header bars: full-width colored by category (Morning: #4A90E2; Mealtime: #27AE60; Bedtime: #9B59B6; Transitions: #F39C12)
- Script boxes: light gray background #F5F5F5 with rounded corners

Cut & Bleed Details

Include a separate, hideable layer for cut lines. Cut lines should be light gray dashed lines 0.5pt weight. Add 0.125" bleed around each card and ensure all important content stays within 0.25" safe zone. Include registration marks and crop marks for precise trimming.

Backside Alignment & Duplex Guidance

Design backs mirrored to match fronts when duplex printed (flip on short edge). Ensure header bars, icons, and safe zones align across front/back. Use thin divider lines (light gray) between sections on the back for readability. Maintain consistent margins so parents can cut and pair fronts with backs easily.



This diagram shows how to set up duplex printing so card fronts and backs align perfectly for trimming and lamination.

Export & File Specifications

Export as a print-ready PDF (Letter 8.5"×11", portrait) with layers preserved: artwork, cut-lines, registration marks. Color mode: CMYK. Resolution: 300 DPI minimum. Embed fonts. Target final PDF file size: under 3MB. Include a separate PDF or layer with only cut lines for the printer.

Checklist

- • All 12 cards follow identical structure
- • Category color coding consistent
- • Icons visible at 5"×7" size
- • Text readable at print size
- • Cut lines visible but unobtrusive
- • Front/back alignment checked for duplex
- • Footer present on every page

Final Notes for Parents

These cards are designed to be laminated and kept handy—on the fridge, in the car, or in a parenting bag. Use them as quick scripts during stressful moments. The CALM framework encourages containment, bounded choice, clear limits, and gentle mentoring so parents can stay grounded while teaching children predictable boundaries.

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