

Giving Effective Instructions

Help for parents to improve your child's behavior through effective instruction



What To Say

In our work with many children, we have noticed that if parents simply change the way they give instructions, they can often achieve significant improvements in the child's behavior.

	Instead of:	Try this!
Avoid "Lets" Instructions	"Let's clean up your room"	"Please clean up your room"
	"Let's get out your homework"	"Please get out your homework"
Don't Ask Questions	"Can you get dressed for school?"	"Please get dressed for school"
	"Could you pick up your dishes?"	"Please put your dishes in the sink"
Be Specific	"Behave when you're at the table"	"Please eat quietly at the table"
	"Try to be good today"	"Please listen to your teacher at school today"
Avoid Lists	"Get up and get dressed, brush your teeth, and get your things ready for school"	"Please get up out of bed now" (then wait before giving other instructions)
	"Get your homework finished and get all your chores done tonight"	"Please get out your homework and a pencil" (then wait before giving other instructions)

How To Say It

	Instead of:	Try this!
Get Your Child's Attention First	Giving an instruction from across the room	Going close and getting eye contact
Reduce Distractions	Having lots of people talking or things going on	Making sure there are few distractions
Prepare Your Child for Transitions	Saying, "Turn off the TV and brush your teeth."	Saying, "In 5 minutes, you need to turn off the TV and brush your teeth."
Use The Right Tone	Using an angry or demanding voice	Using a calm and even voice
Be Clear	Giving a complicated instruction	Giving the instruction, then asking for it to be repeated back to you