



Talking with children & being Heard.

Some wonderful tips which will help you to talk with your child and ensure that they listen.

Connect Before You Direct

Before giving your child directions, squat to your child's eye level and engage your child in eye-to-eye contact to get his attention. Teach him how to focus: "Mary, I need your eyes." "Billy, I need your ears." Offer the same body language when listening to the child. Be sure not to make your eye contact so intense that your child perceives it as controlling rather than connecting.



Address The Child

Open your request with the child's name, "Lauren, will you please..."

Stay Brief

We use the one-sentence rule: Put the main directive in the opening sentence. The longer you ramble, the more likely your child is to become parent-deaf.

Too much talking is a very common mistake when discussing an issue. It gives the child the feeling that you're not quite sure what it is you want to say. If she can keep you talking she can get you sidetracked.

Stay Simple

Use short sentences with one-syllable words. Listen to how kids communicate with each other and take note. When your child shows that glazed, disinterested look, you are no

longer being understood.

Ask Your Child to Repeat the Request Back to You If he can't, it's too long or too complicated.

Make an offer the child can't refuse

You can reason with a two or three-year-old, especially to avoid power struggles. "Get dressed so you can go outside and play." Offer a reason for your request that is to the child's advantage, and one that is difficult to refuse. This gives her a reason to move out of her power position and do what you want her to do.



Be Positive

Instead of "no running," try: "Inside we walk, outside you may run."

Begin your Directives With "I want"-("I would like you to")

Instead of "Get down," say "I want you to get down."

Instead of "Let Becky have a turn," say "I want you to let Becky have a turn now." This works well with children who want to please but don't like being ordered. By saying "I want," you give a reason for compliance rather than just an order.

"When...Then."

"When you get your teeth brushed, then we'll begin the story." "When your work is finished, then you can watch TV." "When," which implies that you expect obedience, works better than "if," which suggests that the child has a choice when you don't mean to give him one.

Legs First, Mouth Second

Instead of hollering, "Turn off the TV, it's time for dinner!" walk into the room where your child is watching TV, join in with your child's interests for a few minutes, and then, during a commercial break, have your child turn off the TV. Going to your child conveys you're serious about your request; otherwise children interpret this as a mere preference.

Giving Choices - keep it simple

"Do you want to put your pajamas on or brush your teeth first?" "Red shirt or blue one?"



Speak Developmentally Correctly

The younger the child, the shorter and simpler your directives should be. Consider your child's level of understanding. For example, a common error parents make is asking a three-year-old, "Why did you do that?" Most adults can't always answer that question about their

behavior. Try instead, "Let's talk about what you did."

Speak Socially Correctly

Even a two-year-old can learn "please." Expect your child to be polite. Children shouldn't feel manners are optional. Speak to your children the way you want them to speak to you.

Speak Psychologically Correctly

Threats and judgmental openers are likely to put the child on the defensive. "You" messages make a child clam up. "I" messages are non-accusing. Instead of "You'd better do this..." or "You must..." try "I would like..." or "I am so pleased when you..." Instead of "You need to clear the table," say "I need you to clear the table." Don't ask a leading question when a negative answer is not an option. "Will you please pick up your coat?" Just say, "Pick up your coat, please."



Talk The Child Down

The louder your child yells, the softer you respond. Let your child ventilate while you interject timely comments: "I understand" or "Can I help?" Sometimes just having a caring listener available will wind down the tantrum. If you come in at his level, you have two tantrums to deal with. Be the adult for him.

Settle The Listener

Before giving your directive, restore emotional equilibrium, otherwise you are wasting your time. Nothing sinks in when a child is an emotional wreck.

Replay Your Message

Toddlers need to be told a thousand times. Children under two have difficulty internalizing your directives. Most three-year-olds begin to internalize directives so that what you ask begins to sink in. Do less and less repeating as your child gets older.

Let Your Child Complete The Thought

Instead of "Don't leave your mess piled up," try: "Matthew, think of where you want to store your soccer stuff." Letting the child fill in the blanks is more likely to create a lasting lesson.

Use Rhyme Rules

"If you hit, you must sit." Get your child to repeat them.



Give Likable Alternatives

You can't go by yourself to the park; but you can play in the neighbor's yard.

Give Advance Notice

"We are leaving soon. Say bye-bye to the toys, bye-bye to the girls..."

Open Up a Closed Child

Carefully chosen phrases open up closed little minds and mouths. Stick to topics that you know your child gets excited about. Ask questions that require more than a yes or no. Stick to specifics. Instead of "Did you have a good day at school today?" try "What is the most fun thing you did today?"

Use "When You...I Feel...Because..."

When you run away from mommy in the store I feel worried because you might get lost.

Close The Discussion

If a matter is really closed to discussion, say so. "I'm not changing my mind about this. Sorry." You'll save wear and tear on both you and your child. Reserve your "I mean business" tone of voice for when you do.



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