

Giving Effective Directions

Children respond to simple, direct, and specific commands better than open-ended questions or lengthy instructions.

Do's

Make eye contact.

Call child's name first, pause until eye contact is made, give direction.

Give a direct command.

"Put the ball away."

Tell child what to do.

"Put your hands down by your side."

Give simple commands.

"Brush your teeth."

Specify exactly what the child should do.

"Put your dirty shirt in the clothes hamper in your closet."

Use a firm but not angry voice.

Use "let's" if you plan to complete the command with your child.

"Let's pick up your blocks."

Provide rationale/reason before the command.

Dont's

Give command from another room.

Present commands as questions.

"Will you put the ball away?"

Tell child what not to do.

"Don't hit your sister."

Give chain commands.

"Brush your teeth, put your pajamas on, and go to bed."

Give vague commands.

"Clean up your room."

Raise your voice.

Use "let's" if you expect your child to complete the direction by themselves.

Provide rationale/reason after the command.