

Giving Good Commands

Clear commands and constant follow up are keys to helping your kids or teens learn to follow commands. Practice helps kids or teens learn to listen better. Before giving a command, make sure you have the kid's focus by having the kid look at you, be near the kid, and turning the TV/tablet off.

Rule	Examples	Why?
Make Commands Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick up the block • Sit down on the chair (point) • Hang your jacket on this hook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it clear that the kids must complete the task
Tell, Don't Ask	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your walking feet (not "will you use your walking feet?") • Please pick up your blocks (not "can you pick up your blocks") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessens the chance your kid will say no
Make Commands Simple and Small	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brush your teeth (not "brush your teeth, put on your PJs and get into bed") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier to follow • Some kids may forget or lose focus with multi-step commands
Tell Kids What To Do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put your feet on the floor (not "don't stand on the chair") • Use your inside voice (not "don't yell") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell kids what he/she can do instead of what he/she cannot do
Make Commands clear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a quiet voice (not "behave yourself") • Walk next to the trolley (not "be good in the supermarket") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kid knows exactly what you want them to do
Use a Neutral Tone of Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please come and sit next to me (not "come here NOW!") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trains kids to listen before parent uses yelling
Be Polite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please hand me the crayon • Put your plate in the sink please 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows good social skills • Trains kids to be polite

Limit Telling Why and Time Them Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you tell them why you are giving the command, do it before the command, eg: • “Our play time is over and we need to go to the shops. Please put your crayons away” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids may forget the command while you explain. • Telling the command last helps parent focus on follow up.
Give Your Kid 5 seconds to Follow the Command	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Count to 5 before giving another prompt • Count quietly to yourself, on your fingers, or softly out loud 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kids need time to understand commands and we want to give them a chance to listen • Gives you time to decide next step (ignore, warn with consequence, prompt)
Always Praise Kid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good job putting away the blocks! High five! • Thanks so much for listening the first time. You are a great helper (hug) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Praising kids when they listen to commands makes them more likely to listen in the future

References

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