

Giving Good Directions

Rule	Reason	Examples
Make commands direct, not indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct commands tell the child that the parent expects him/her to obey (as opposed to making a suggestion) • Makes it clear that the child, not the parent, is to do the task 	<p><u>Direct:</u> Please sit down right here.</p> <p><u>Indirect:</u> Would you like to sit down?</p> <p><u>Direct:</u> Please pick up your toys.</p> <p><u>Indirect:</u> Let's pick up your toys, okay?</p>
Make commands single and small, not compound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is easier for children to obey small commands that are not overwhelming • Young children can't remember multiple-part commands • The child gets more opportunities for praise • Helps parents stay on track 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please put your shoes in the closet (instead of . . . Clean your room) • Please put on your pajamas. • Please brush your teeth. • Please use the bathroom. (instead of . . . Get ready for bed.)
State commands positively. (tell child what <u>to do</u> , instead of what <u>not to do</u>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children often rebel against "stop" and "don't" commands • Tells child what (s)he can do instead • The child gets more opportunity for praise • Avoiding criticism protects self-esteem and the relationship 	<p><u>Child:</u> (on kitchen counter)</p> <p><u>Parent:</u> Please get down. (instead of . . . Don't climb on the counter!)</p> <p><u>Child:</u> (bouncing ball)</p> <p><u>Parent:</u> Please get a book to read. (instead of . . . Stop bouncing that ball!)</p> <p><u>Child:</u> (runs away from parent)</p> <p><u>Parent:</u> Please hold my hand. (instead of . . . Don't run away!)</p>

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<p>Avoid giving too many direct commands</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neither adults nor children like to be told what to do constantly If parents give too many direct commands in a day, it is hard to follow through consistently 	<p>Parent: Please hand me the paper. <i>Child:</i> (hands paper to parent) Parent: Thanks for doing what I asked! You're a good helper. <i>Child:</i> (fails to hand parent paper) Parent: You have two choices. You can hand me your paper or sit in time-out.</p>
<p>Always provide a consequence for obedience and disobedience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the fastest way to teach young children to mind better Compliance should not be taken for granted (or it may soon disappear) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please watch TV or color quietly. Please put on your white socks or your blue socks. Use your indoor voice or play in the backyard.
<p>Use choice commands when appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages the development of autonomy and decision-making Doesn't take the "power" away from a child who tends to get in power struggles 	<p>Poorly-timed . . .</p> <p>Parent: Put the crayons away. <i>Child:</i> Why? Parent: Because we need to go. <i>Child:</i> After I finish. Better . . .</p> <p>Parent: Our playtime is over and we need to go. Please put the crayons away. <i>Child:</i> Why? Parent: (ignores delay tactics because explanation has already been given)</p>
<p>Use well-timed explanations (before the command or after the child has complied)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children who ask for explanations are usually more interested in stalling than knowing the answer Give the child the impression that he/she might be able to talk their way out of it Explanations given before the command can head off arguing and improve compliance 	<p>Poorly-timed . . .</p> <p>Parent: Put the crayons away. <i>Child:</i> Why? Parent: Because we need to go. <i>Child:</i> After I finish. Better . . .</p> <p>Parent: Our playtime is over and we need to go. Please put the crayons away. <i>Child:</i> Why? Parent: (ignores delay tactics because explanation has already been given)</p>