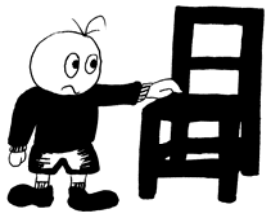


TEACHING CHILDREN TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS



One of the most challenging tasks that parents often face is teaching their children to follow directions. It becomes frustrating for the whole family when parents have to repeatedly give their children the same directions ("Pick up your toys"). The recommendations below can be of assistance in teaching children to follow parental directions the first time they are given.

***Be prepared to enforce.** Parents should avoid giving their children a direction unless they are prepared to enforce it. If parents do not enforce their directions, then children learn that their parents don't mean what they say.

***Get their attention.** Parents should always get their children's attention before giving a direction. Parents should avoid yelling directions from another room.

***Don't ask questions.** Parents should avoid phrasing directions as questions (for example, don't say "Justin, would you like to pick up your toys now?").

***Don't be vague.** Parents should avoid giving vague directions such as "Be good," or "Be careful." There may be significant differences between how the parent and child interpret vague directions such as "being good." Parents should make their directions clear and specific.

***Tell them what to do.** Parents should try to give directions that tell children what to do instead of what not to do. For example, it is better to say, "Stay by my side," than "Don't run away."

***Praise them.** Parents should praise their children as soon as they have begun to follow the direction. Parents don't need to wait until the task is completed to offer praise.

***Show appreciation.** When the task is complete, parents should let their

children know they appreciate their compliance.

***Give time limit.** If children do not start to follow a direction within ten seconds, parents should put them in time-out immediately.

***Don't repeat warnings.** Parents should avoid giving their children repeated warnings. Children can learn to follow directions after one or no warning just as easily as they can learn to follow directions after five or six warnings.

***Repeat the direction.** After the time-out is complete, parents should repeat the direction to their children. If they do not start to follow the direction, time-out should be used again. This process should be repeated until children comply with the direction.



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